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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

MARCH 20, 1989

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TRB
FROM WASHINGTON

Secular Sermon

A couple of days after the Salman Rushdie story started to break, I happened to be at one of those innumerable conferences that right-wing think tanks put on in Washington. During the coffee break, one of the people I was standing around with, a young aide to a hard-right senator, said, "This Rushdie business is really something." "Unbelievable," I said, pleased to have something to agree with this fellow about. "Yeah," he went on. "You know, these so-called writers and intellectuals have been laughing at religion for hundreds of years. It's about time somebody blew the whistle on it."

I peered closely at my interlocutor, hoping to discern some sign—a smile, a wink, a crinkling around the eyes—that this was a joke. None was forthcoming. If it was irony I wanted, I'd come to the wrong conversation.

A few days later I read a syndicated column that began with apparent relish, "If the ayatollah has his way, the last sound the trendy leftist Salman Rushdie will hear is the swish of a scimitar." The rest of the column was devoted to denouncing Rushdie as "an artistic delinquent" and a "scoundrel," his work as "vandalism" that depicts Islam as "a gutter religion" and is "the moral equivalent of an anti-Semitic book," and "the Western literary herd" as hiding behind "the First Amendment, artistic freedom and all that." The author was not some obscure crank, but rather a famous crank: former White House confidant of Presidents Nixon and Reagan and current television star Patrick Buchanan.

Such views, happily, remain marginal in this country. For most Americans, including most American conservatives, the Rushdie case is a pretty obvious call. On one side, a fanatical terrorist-theocrat, the unquestioned ruler of a large and powerful state and an even larger and more powerful movement, a despot who has ordered the execution of tens of thousands of his countrymen for their opinions and has sent hundreds of thousands more to their deaths in war against their co-religionists. He offers a million dollars to anyone who will kill the author of a book deemed blasphemous. On the other side, a novelist in his quiet London study. He taps out fictions, trying obliquely to understand the real world by creating imaginary ones. On one side, howling mobs, the burning of books, serious hatefulness. On the other side, calm discussion, the reading of books, serious playfulness. On one side, murder. On the other, art. Which side are you on?

That's an easy one, or should be, for Westerners who think of themselves as defenders of liberty. Even so, it took a week for President Bush to get around to acknowledging that something was amiss, and when he did he addressed himself only to the grossest aspect of the affair. "However offensive that book may be," he said, "inciting murder and offering rewards for its perpetration are deeply offensive to the norms of civilized behavior. And our position on terrorism is well known."

This did not go very far, and it was not even all right as far as it went. "However offensive that book may be," for the president to choose this moment of terrible vulnerability to dismiss it as such was considerably more so. The Ayatollah Khomeini is out to murder more than a man, more even than a book. He is out to murder freedom, and he is out to murder one of the political arrangements that make freedom possible: secularism.

The Ayatollah cannot succeed in murdering freedom, but he has nicked it, and the wound is visible and not yet stanched. Rushdie has had to cancel his tour of the United States; his American wife, Marianne Wiggins, who also has just published a new (and acclaimed) novel, has had to cancel hers. Indeed the Rushdies have had to cancel what had been their lives, in order to save them. They are in hiding, possibly for good. *The Satanic Verses*—"that book"—was withdrawn from sale at thousands of chain-owned bookstores; that will not prevent it from reaching more American readers than it would have without Khomeini's threats, but the firebombing of stores that do carry the book has begun. The more lasting result will be insidious and unmeasurable: the books and articles that will never be proposed, commissioned, written, or published because of Iran's intimidation.

Bush treated the Rushdie affair as an issue of terrorism, which it is. He ignored it as an issue of civil liberties, which, more dangerously, it also is. (Per-

continued on page 49

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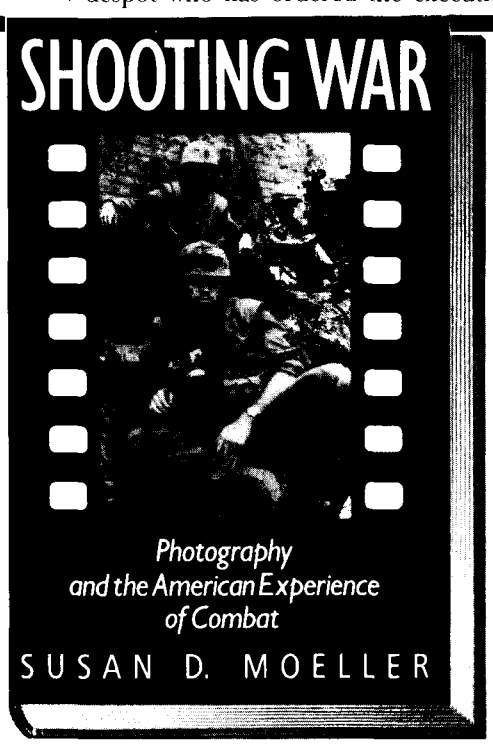

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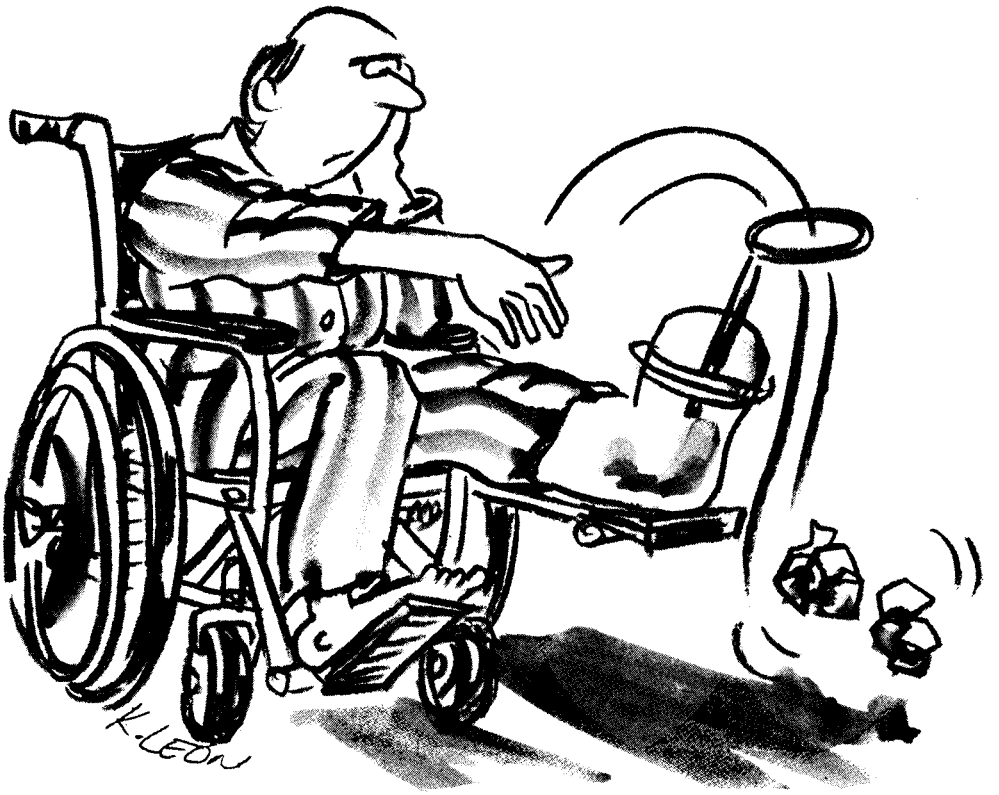

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CORRESPONDENCE

The Other Black America

To the editors:

Morton M. Kondracke states in "The Two Black Americas" (February 6), "Given the choice of hiring a black male from the 'ghetto' or somebody else, many white employers may well choose somebody else. The danger, as the culture of poverty deepens, is that this increasingly will be a sound economic decision on their part." In these two sentences, he has given as strong an endorsement of racial discrimination as I have ever read. I resent such racist propaganda directed against a specific category of people of which I am a member. Living in Boston, a city unparalleled in both racial hostility and housing costs, my choices of residence are limited because of my race. Nevertheless, I do not believe that because I am an African-American, a male, and a resident of an area that ignorant white Americans might refer to as "the ghetto," the choice to hire "somebody else" would be a "sound economic decision" on the part of a white employer. I have a Master's degree and have spent ten years at various professional jobs. Neither my race, my gender, nor my address negates my many accomplishments, nor should these factors disqualify me or anyone else from employment (read the 14th Amendment). Unfortunately, however, President Bush's campaign ads and Kondracke's article legitimize discrimination in America.

STEVEN J. L. TAYLOR
Boston, Massachusetts

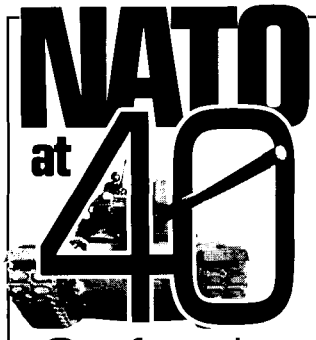
To the editors:

If, as Morton Kondracke states in his article, the underclass constitutes less than 15 percent of the black population, why does your cover show five people sitting in desolation, and one standing up?

LISA NANNEY
Melrose, Massachusetts

Morton Kondracke replies:

Mr. Taylor's situation bears no resemblance to that of the underclass inner-city black males I was writing about, whose tragic lack of skills does make it (economically speaking, not morally) a rational decision to hire a better-qualified person instead of them. It does those young men no good whatever for a middle-class person like Mr. Taylor to leap to accusations of racism when their plight is accurately described.



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Straight Shooting

To the editors:

Matthew Maranz's article on machine guns ("Guns 'R' Us," January 23) was short on fact, long on innuendo. The only machine gun I know of that is capable of firing hundreds of bullets with a single squeeze of the trigger is an Army weapon, "Puff the Magic Dragon" or the Vulcan; and I believe it has a solenoid, not a trigger. And I doubt Maranz is going to buy one from Automatic Weaponry of Brentwood, Tennessee.

After firing 50 to 100 rounds at rapid fire, the heat generated by the combustion of the propellant and the friction in the barrel is sufficient to warp the barrel and seize the action of virtually any air-cooled automatic weapon. Longer-barreled weapons last a little longer, but I doubt that Maranz's MAC-10 would fire more than 50 rounds at a single burst.

His statement that the Ingram M-11 (a weapon feared worldwide for its ability to misfire, jam, and wound anyone in the general vicinity with its phenomenal inaccuracy) fires 1,200 rounds a minute is wrong. If you could somehow find a way to carry the 34.5 pounds that 1,200 rounds weigh and a mechanism capable of delivering them to the weapon at 1,200 rounds per minute, the gun would melt long before 300 rounds (it may fire at a *rate* of 1,200 rounds per minute). The same applies to the MAC-10, another weapon feared for its ability to harm innocent bystanders, including the owner.

ERNIE MONTAGUE
Oakland, California

Borderline Debate

To the editors:

Charles Lane, in his review of my book *Sanctuary* ("Gimme Shelter," February 6), states flatly that those who gave sanctuary to Central American refugees in the early and mid-1980s were "wrong," and he faults the book for not drawing the same conclusion. I seem "to think the facts speak for themselves." Where I come from that's a compliment.

Lane seems to think the reader should be bludgeoned into judgment on a complex human dilemma. Do you break the law if another person's safety, even life, may be at stake? Who is to decide when a life is in danger? When do you prosecute otherwise law-abiding individuals for trying to help others? Are these questions to be answered in terms of "right" and "wrong"? I don't think it's that easy.

He finds it disturbing that I did not challenge the sanctuary movement's comparison of its activities with those of

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THE BATTERED CHILD

Two weeks before his fourth birthday, Joshua DeShaney was beaten into a coma that left him permanently and profoundly retarded. Surgeons discovered massive brain damage, including pools of blood resulting from months of internal bleeding. The day before, a county social worker had visited the family because of past reports of child abuse. She hadn't bothered to look in on Joshua.

Last month the Supreme Court relieved her and the state of Wisconsin of liability for Joshua's injuries. According to the Court, the government had no constitutional duty to protect the child from his father's assaults. Harsh though this may seem, the Court was right. Growing up free of physical abuse is not a constitutional guarantee. But preventing child abuse is nonetheless a vital function of the government, and the government seems to be failing at it. The Supreme Court's decision is an occasion for Congress and the Bush administration to think carefully about what the government can and can't do to protect children.

The lawyer for Joshua's mother (the boy had been in his father's custody since age one) argued that the government's failure to protect her son violated the due process clause, which primarily guarantees the right of an individual to a hearing, but has also been interpreted as guarding other fundamental rights. The clause says that "no state shall . . . deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." As the Supreme Court noted, Joshua was effectively deprived of his liberty, and even of a meaningful life, but at the hands of his father rather than state officials. The due process clause was intended, Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote, "to protect the people from the State, not to ensure that the State protected them from each other."

To be sure, the government is morally obligated to protect its citizens, including children, from violence. But the Constitution does not create a judicially enforceable right to government protection. And that's fortunate; if it did, the federal courts would end up micro-managing police departments, which would nonetheless be endlessly sued.

The lawyer for Joshua's mother might (and did) reply that the government has a special duty to protect people when it enters into a "special relationship." According to some lower courts, a special relationship exists once the government undertakes to help a victim. Having extended protection, the government cannot suddenly remove it. This argument doesn't hold up. It's true that the government tried to help Joshua and then failed to do so. But he was no worse off than he would have been if the government had ignored him in the first place. It is not as if he was made a ward of the state and *then* was neglected. As Rehnquist wrote, the state "does not become the permanent guarantor of an individual's safety by having once offered him shelter." End of case.

While Rehnquist's logic is impeccable, it also seems heartless. In a passionate dissent, Justice Harry Blackmun wrote: "Poor Joshua! Victim of repeated attacks by an irresponsible, bullying, cowardly, and intemperate father, and abandoned by [the defendants] who placed him in a dangerous predicament and who knew or learned what was going on, and yet did essentially nothing. . . ." Could not, he asked, the Court have adopted a more "sympathetic" reading of the law?

The logical integrity of the law is no small value, but let's hypothetically accept Blackmun's implicit premise that a sacrifice in logical rigor would be a reasonable price to pay for saving the Joshua DeShaneys of this world. The fact remains that it wouldn't work. While allowing lawsuits against social workers might prod them to act more aggressively, the gain would be marginal. Social workers are already overworked, the result of an inadequate government response to a problem that is clearly growing at a rapid rate.

More than two million cases of child abuse and child neglect are reported each year; the number more than doubled between 1980 and 1986. Caseloads are now two or three times above a manageable level. In Dallas, almost half of the city's caseworkers quit last year, citing burnout. And the shortage of foster care means that even when social workers discover abused children, it is hard to find them a new home.

Don't expect the problem to get better anytime soon. Quite the contrary. Child abuse is strongly correlated with drug and alcohol abuse (a factor in 40 percent of all abuse cases); with poverty; with single-parent homes;

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and with stepparent homes—none of which shows signs of dramatically declining in frequency, and some of which will probably become more common. Dealing with drug abuse, poverty, and other root causes directly is an indispensable part of any long-term strategy against child abuse, but a more direct attack is also needed. Besides, there is a sense in which child abuse is a root cause of poverty; abused poor children don't grow up to be likely candidates for social mobility.

The most effective child-abuse programs are on the state level, but the federal government's role is critical. States rely for funds on myriad matching federal grants and on Title XX of the Social Security Act. The first thing we need to do is beef up the underfunded National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, which channels federal funds and disseminates information. The center is without a full-time director and hasn't had one for two years, a testament to the low priority child abuse now has on the national agenda. President Bush should increase the center's budget—or at least, in a departure from Republican tradition, make use of what funding is authorized. For fiscal year 1989, Congress set aside $48 million for the center, but the Reagan administration used only $25.3 million, and Bush has shown no inclination to fund the program fully for 1990. Combined with the Reagan administration's cuts in Title XX funding, this piddling level of support ensures that child abuse won't wane anytime soon.

NOTEBOOK

SURPRISE!!! It can be a vexing thing for readers when an old, familiar magazine changes its face. So editors shouldn't embark on a redesign project casually. But there are good reasons to take a fresh look from time to time at a magazine's visual configuration. Our previous design served us well for nearly ten years. It was elegant and functional. But, like all designs, it had its constraints. A particular frustration—for readers and for our circulation department—was that the cover design made it difficult to find TNR on many newsstands. Because the logo didn't extend to the cover's left margin—the only part of the magazine's face that's visible on the more crowded magazine racks—our name was sometimes nowhere to be found. This and a variety of other considerations (some less plainly commercial) convinced us that it was time for a change. When we retained the accomplished and eclectic New York design firm Drenttel Doyle Partners, we did not have to tell them who our readers were or what they might like. The firm's principals had been devoted readers for years; they understood our needs and our possibilities. The cover format they have created is at once classical and contemporary. It harks back to the magazine's first covers of 1914 in reducing the size and therefore the weight of the word "the" in our name, an apt modification. At the same time, the new logo opens the cover to more complex illustration and, when required, more sheer information. For this alone we would be grateful to Drenttel Doyle. But they also helped us style the inside pages, producing a magazine that is more vibrant and readable—and, paradoxically, more economical: though the new typeface (Baskerville) is no smaller than the old, the new design enables each issue to carry more words than before. (Don't ask us how it works, but it does.) As it happened, we couldn't live with two or three of the more daring proposals put forward by the people at Drenttel Doyle. We insisted that the design retain a few relatively "conservative" elements that they doubtless believe detract from the coherence of their original vision. In fact, they told us as much, though in the end they were tolerant of our backwardness. Our fruitfully tempestuous association with Stephen Doyle, Bill Drenttel, and Rosemarie Turk allows us to present a new magazine, simultaneously bold and sound, of which we are proud. We assume our readers know they'll be getting the old NEW REPUBLIC wine in a new NEW REPUBLIC bottle.

MEDIA WATCH WATCH: *Every month a newsletter called* Media Watch *is published by something called the Media Research Center, a right-wing outfit that likes, among other things, to take the Eastern liberal media to task for using the term "right-wing" in an implicitly pejorative way. The lead story in the February issue is called "Abortion Distortion." It seems that a survey of four networks and four newspapers revealed the following about coverage of the Supreme Court's decision to hear an abortion case: "Reporters used the term 'anti-abortion' 42 times, but 'pro-life' just six times. Identifying the other side, they used 'pro-choice' 29 times but never once tagged abortion proponents 'pro-abortion.' " The people at the Media Research Center, after careful analysis, attributed this pattern to media bias. Maybe they're right, but there is an alternative explanation: media accuracy. All people who call themselves "pro-life" would also profess to being "anti-abortion" in every sense of that term, as indeed they are. Very few people who call themselves "pro-choice" would call themselves "pro-abortion," and, indeed, few of them think that abortion is a good thing in any absolute sense, or consider it just another form of birth control, no worse than using a condom. J. P. McFadden, president of the Human Life Foundation, begins his junk letters: "Fellow Anti-abortion (I hope) American." Planned Parenthood does not begin its junk letters: "Dear pro-abortion (we hope) American."*

LUCE MORALS: Would Carl Icahn or Henry Kravis please take over Time Inc.? That way we can find out if J. Richard Munro, Time's chairman, was right when he told Lester Bernstein in the *New York Times Magazine* (February 26) that "if anybody tried to take us over, they'd find there are a lot of people who wouldn't work for Jack the Ripper." You see, Munro said, "We don't make cookies here. We create ideas. We feel strongly about what we do. We know what this company means to America." If grateful Americans would like a little more detail about what Time Inc. is doing for its nation these days, just grab a recent issue of *Time*—say, the February 20 issue—and thumb through the in-house ads. First, for armchair quarterbacks everywhere, there's the Sports Illustrated 25th Anniversary Swimsuit Video ("The video you've been dreaming about"). Maybe that's what Time Inc. president

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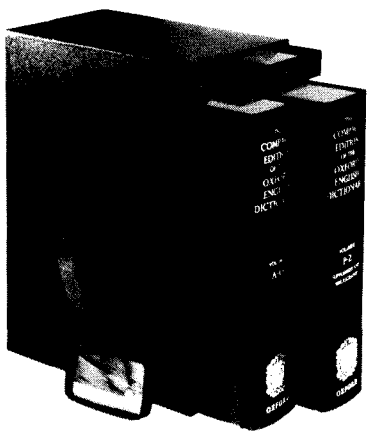

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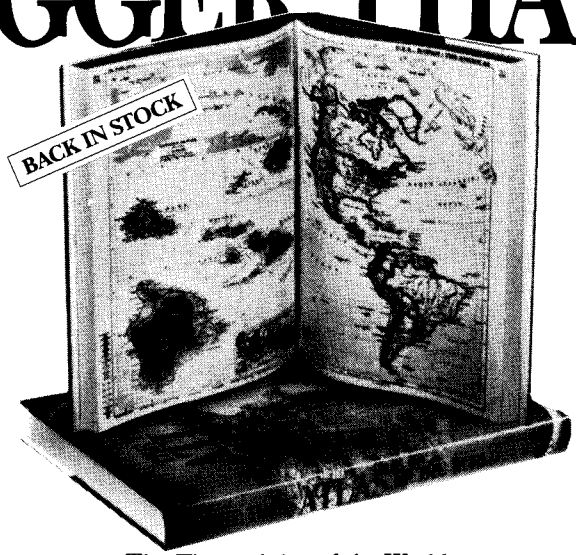

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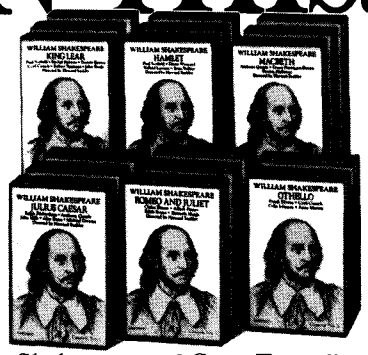

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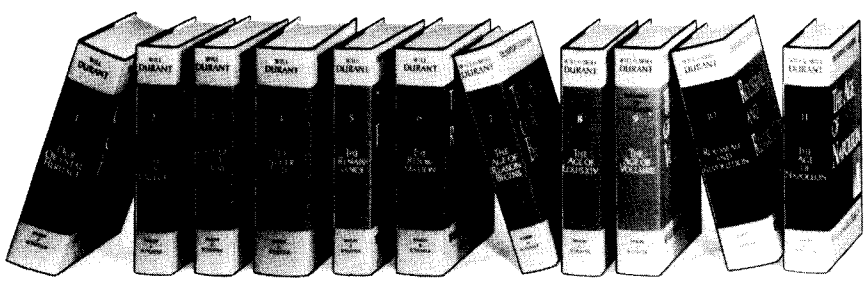

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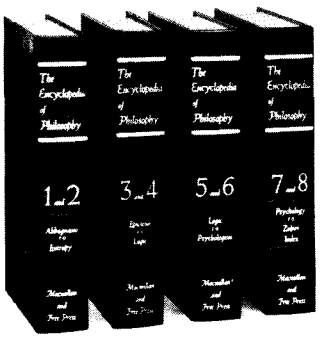

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Nicholas J. Nicholas Jr. was referring to when he told Bernstein that "much of our video programming is just as journalistic as *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*." Or maybe he was thinking of "Glory! Glory!" the show produced by Time Inc.'s Home Box Office and featured in a full-page ad further back in the same issue. ("She sang like a saint and lived like a sinner. Pulling it off on prime-time TV was her greatest miracle of all.") Granted, there is evidence in this issue of *Time* that Henry Luce's quest to edify the masses hasn't been entirely abandoned, but somehow it's not all that reassuring; Time-Life Books' lurid two-page spread on its THIRD REICH book series features head shots of Goebbels, Himmler, Goering, and Hitler along with headline capsulizations of each ("drug addict," "paranoid" etc.). Media conglomerates are of course free to make as much of their money as they want off of primal ventures. But could they *please* spare us the sermons about their higher calling? "The essence of this company is journalism, from day one," says Nick Nicholas. "Virtually everything we do radiates from the fact that this company is in business to make a difference in the broadest sense." So to speak.

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—Wall Street Journal, *February 14*

"He clearly had a greater command of the details of policy than did his predecessor, Ronald Reagan . . ." —from the text of the article

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

PARTY OF LINCOLN

By Fred Barnes

The least envied task in Ronald Reagan's White House was bringing the president bad news. George Bush normally shirked this duty, but a black aide, Thad Garrett, once got the assignment. At the time, Reagan was embroiled in controversy over his decisions to tinker with the Voting Rights Act and to grant tax exemptions to segregated schools. Garrett went to the Oval Office to inform Reagan about his poor relations with blacks. Blacks think you're the devil, Garrett said. Reagan didn't believe him, and relations stayed sour. This made Bush, who prides himself on his friendships with blacks, cringe. "It was painful for Bush," says a Bush adviser. "He had to carry Reagan's water, defend him all the way before civil rights groups. There wasn't much of a record to defend before the NAACP."

Reagan erected a barrier to blacks. Because he was retrograde on civil rights, even middle-class blacks were deaf to his message on other issues, which they might have found attractive otherwise. Bush and the Republican Party paid a high price for this. Bush got ten percent of the black vote in 1988, a pathetic showing against a Democratic candidate with little appeal to blacks. In 1986 heavy turnout among blacks helped Democrats capture the Senate. "Had we had 20 percent of the black vote in 1986, we would not have lost control of the Senate," said Republican national chairman Lee Atwater on CNN's "Evans & Novak." Atwater's goal is getting 20 percent regularly for Republican candidates. Bush can be re-elected without it, but as Atwater says, "It's necessary if we truly want to be a majority [party] in this country."

Twenty percent is attainable, but it won't be easy. Even if Bush generates a personal following among blacks, that may not significantly boost the GOP's black appeal. Richard Thornburgh, Bush's attorney general, got 58 percent of the black vote when elected governor of Pennsylvania in 1978. But he says he found it hard to get party officials "to open the door" to blacks. Moreover, "It's very difficult to translate support for a candidate in one election into a permanent political base."

One element of the Bush drive to woo blacks is fundamental. "You've got to avoid doing what Reagan did, alienating blacks," says Robert Teeter, Bush's pollster and senior political adviser. Reagan's problem with blacks was part atmospherics, part policy. He didn't pay them much attention, except to criticize black leaders for allegedly misrepresenting his position on civil rights. In Reagan's second term, his aides toyed with the

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idea of presidential outreach to blacks, but concluded it wasn't worth the effort it would take to persuade Reagan. So the atmospherics at the Reagan White House stayed bad.

For Bush, improving the racial climate was a snap. There's a "terrific tone and some terrific rhetoric," says Ralph Neas, the executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Bush met with a string of black leaders, including Jesse Jackson, during the transition. He's talked up black problems, showing what Teeter calls "an awareness, a caring, a sensitivity to blacks." He spoke at a prayer breakfast in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. on January 16. He declared that King's dream—"that bigotry and indifference to disadvantage will find no safe home on our shores, in our public life, in our neighborhoods, or in our home"—is now his dream as well. "It will, I promise, be my mission as president of the United States," Bush said. Blacks figure in Bush's social life. At a private dinner on February 18, two of the 15 invitees were black (James Cheek, the president of Howard University, and Gerald Boyd, a reporter for the *New York Times*). Another guest was Hispanic.

Reagan's biggest policy mistake with blacks, fiddling with the basic civil rights legislation from the 1960s, is one Bush won't repeat. He opposed the schemes to soften the impact of the Voting Rights Act and to prevent the IRS from denying tax exemptions to segregated schools. True, he didn't say so publicly, but he felt dissent was inappropriate for a vice president. From initial appearances, Bush doesn't have anyone in his administration who wants to kill affirmative action, even if quotas are involved. As attorney general, Edwin Meese lobbied Reagan to rescind the regulations that established racial "goals and timetables" in federal contracts, but Thornburgh says he's not for repealing those rules. Bush says he's against quotas but for "goals and timetables" in minority hiring, promotions, etc. Bush also pleased civil rights leaders with his response to the Supreme Court decision in January striking down the policy in Richmond, Virginia, of awarding 30 percent of city contracts to minority firms. "It didn't kill all set-asides, and it didn't kill off affirmative action," Bush told reporters. "I will not read into that a mandate to me to stop trying on equal employment and on affirmative action generally." That wouldn't have been Reagan's sentiment.

For obvious reasons, Teeter, Atwater, and Bush himself are obsessed with installing blacks in visible positions in the administration. "You look at the governors who've done well [with blacks voters]—Thornburgh, Jim Rhodes," said Teeter. "They named a lot of blacks." At one point, three of the top black officials in the Reagan administration were graduates of the Thornburgh administration—Assistant Secretary Legree Daniels at Education, Shirley Daniels of the women's bureau at Labor, and Gwen King of the White House office of intergovernmental relations. Bush had hoped for at least two blacks in his Cabinet, but one considered for secretary for veterans affairs fell through. Bush was left with a family friend, Louis Sullivan, as secretary of health and human services. In the transition, Bush had specifically instructed his aides to find Sullivan a job.

Bush also picked a black, Fred McClure, as his chief congressional lobbyist, and another, Connie Newman, as head of the Office of Personnel Management. Housing Secretary Jack Kemp, whose first official trip outside Washington was to confer with black officials in Atlanta, named a black, Wendell Gunn, as his chief of staff. Thornburgh retained Edward Dennis as chief of the criminal division and named Bill Lucas as head of the civil rights division. Both are black. But the Bushie most committed to appointing blacks is Chase Untermeyer, the White House personnel chief. "I think that among blacks and minorities there's a sense that Republicans don't mean what they say about opening their party," he says. "That's decades old. As far as personnel is concerned, I'm going to try to start changing that."

Untermeyer says Bush prods him ceaselessly. Every meeting on appointments begins with Bush reciting "a litany. Where are the blacks? Where are the women? Where are the Hispanics?" By the end of February, only one list of nominees—it was the top half-dozen officials at Commerce—got to Bush's desk without any blacks on it. "That won't happen again," Untermeyer says. "A list of ten [nominees] that comes in with no women and minorities is absolutely unacceptable. In any group of ten presidential appointees to be made, it would be reasonable to expect two or three of them to be women and minorities. This is the government of the United States. It should be representative of the United States." Untermeyer says there will be more blacks as the administration wears on. "Whatever number we come out with [in the first round of appointments] will be a base," he says. "George Bush is committed to constantly increasing the number of women and minorities."

That sounds great, but achieving it is something else. Untermeyer concedes that many blacks, including close friends of Bush, don't want to work in the Bush administration for financial or political reasons. And the ones who want jobs may be less qualified. "As a rule," he says, "women and minorities may have less lustrous qualifications on paper than white males." They have talent, but not deep experience. Hiring them, Untermeyer says, "requires a little risk-taking." I've never thought of Bush as a chronic risk-taker, but maybe I'm wrong. In any case, just naming blacks isn't enough for the civil rights community. Neas complained about the choice of Lucas at the civil rights division. Thornburgh turned a "golden opportunity" to name a veteran civil rights lawyer to the job into a "missed opportunity," Neas said. The split over Lucas was the first clash between Bush and civil rights leaders, but not the last. Neas says "economic justice issues"—minimum wage, more housing, parental leave, rights of the handicapped—are now at the top of the civil rights agenda. Bush prefers to champion "economic opportunity" issues, such as enterprise zones and tenant ownership of public housing. The civil rights lobby wants liberal judges. Bush has pledged to pick conservatives.

Atwater's task is to paper over these differences, while stressing how much black yuppies have in common with Republicans. Atwater made progress by denouncing David Duke, the Klansman who won a Louisiana legislative seat as a Republican in February. He wrote in the

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New York Times on February 27 that "making black voters welcome in the Republican Party is my pre-eminent goal." If that's true, then there's a convincing way to prove it. Edward Rollins, the new executive director of the House Republican campaign committee, says the GOP must nominate blacks for safe Republican seats. The party has never done this. If Atwater, Bush's personal choice as GOP chief, manages that, Bush may deserve 20 percent of the black vote. Blacks will know he's no Reagan.

POSTCARD ENGLAND

DEAD AND BREAKFAST

By Joe Queenan

The two most important things in a small child's life are diet and a sense of history, so on our last trip to my wife's native land, we got the kids started right with a rich breakfast of kippers and bangers and mash, followed by a trip to Berkeley Castle, where Edward II was impaled on a spike in 1327. We never could get the tour guide to explain whether it was a red-hot spike or an ordinary one—she kept directing our attention to the reconditioned moat and the unique flora—but while we were in the neighborhood we also stopped off at the smallpox museum and the graveyard where lie the remains of Dicky Pearce, the last court jester in the history of England, who perished "in revelry." By this time the kids were feeling a bit tuckered out, so we stopped off for a cream tea in Lisley, the town where Elizabeth I was reportedly murdered at age ten and replaced by a boy, thus explaining why she was reported to be so incredibly ugly. Then we went back to my brother-in-law's house for fish and chips.

The next morning we were up bright and early and shot over to Avebury, a sort of Triple-A Stonehenge, where the kids got to see the skull of the earliest known victim of encephalitis in the United Kingdom. After a tasty snack of date cakes and carrot soup, we nipped down to Laicock Abbey, where Henry VIII killed off a bunch of monks in 1539 and then turned over the monastery to a close friend. It was still early enough in the day to visit Chippenham, where, after a bracing bite of cornish pasties and steak-and-kidney pies, we retraced the steps of the thieving Vikings, who showed up shortly after New Year's Day in 878, raping and butchering everything that moved and quite a few of the things that didn't. Then we went back to my brother-in-law's house for fish and chips.

Wednesday we had a spin around Cheddar Gorge, where the earliest known evidence of cannibalism in the United Kingdom was recently unearthed. The kids wanted to stay the night at Glastonbury, where Joseph of Arimathea reputedly turned up late one afternoon, carrying the crucified corpse of Christ, but we told them that if we started deviating from our itinerary we wouldn't have a chance to visit Tasburgh, near Norfolk, where Queen Boedicia and her entire family were flogged and raped by the Romans, or Canterbury, where Thomas Becket got cut to ribbons by ax-wielding assassins in the employ of Henry II back in 1170.

"Don't want to miss that!" the kids exclaimed from the back seat. "Floor it, Pop!"

The kids loved Canterbury, but they got even more of a kick out of Portsmouth, where a British sailor on the deck of H.M.S. *Victory* regaled them with a story about Lord Nelson's unusual burial. Seemingly, the corpse of Nelson (whose spine had been blown to smithereens by a French sniper at the Battle of Trafalgar) was smuggled into England by the ship's officers, who pickled the corpse in brandy and then, when the body was safely buried, quaffed the pickling agent to the last drop. Ironically, that afternoon, we had Branston's Pickle with our Plowman's Lunch.

London was a real treat for the little ones. At St. Paul's, we visited the tomb of Charles "Chinese" Gordon, whose head was lopped off and stuck on a pole by dervishes at the Battle of Khartoum in 1884. After scones and tea, we whipped over to Westminster Abbey to visit the tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots, who had her head chopped off by Elizabeth I. And in one of life's amazing little coincidences, who should be buried right next to Mary but Elizabeth Regina herself?

"Were they enemies?" my five-year-old daughter asked.

"No, cousins," I replied.

While visiting Westminster Abbey, we also got to see the spot where Oliver Cromwell was temporarily buried between 1558 and 1561, until an irate crowd disinterred his remains, defiled them, and chucked what was left on a dung heap. By that time we were all ready for a mild curry with *kulcha paratha* and *pompadoms* on the side.

The rest of the week was spent visiting the usual curiosities, including Whitechapel, where Jack the Ripper hacked five prostitutes to pieces, and the Tower of London, where all sorts of unpleasantness occurred. Actually, we thought we might be in for a bit of a disappointment here, because Page 9 of the *Tower Guide* warns, "Stories of innumerable prisoners suffering in deep dungeons and torture chambers are mostly the inventions of propagandists at the time or romantic novelists of a later age." But even so, we still got to see the rooms where Henry IV, Thomas More, the little Princes, Thomas Cramner, the Earl of Essex, several archbishops of Canterbury, and an undetermined number of Henry VIII's wives were murdered, not to mention the spot where Edward IV's brother, the Duke of Clarence, was drowned in a vat of his favorite wine. So nobody felt shortchanged, though by the end of the visit we were all ready for a nice shandy and some fish and chips.

We stayed in England for two more weeks and had many other enjoyable experiences and satisfying meals. Nevertheless, by the end of our trip, I did start to get the impression that the kids were growing restive, and since

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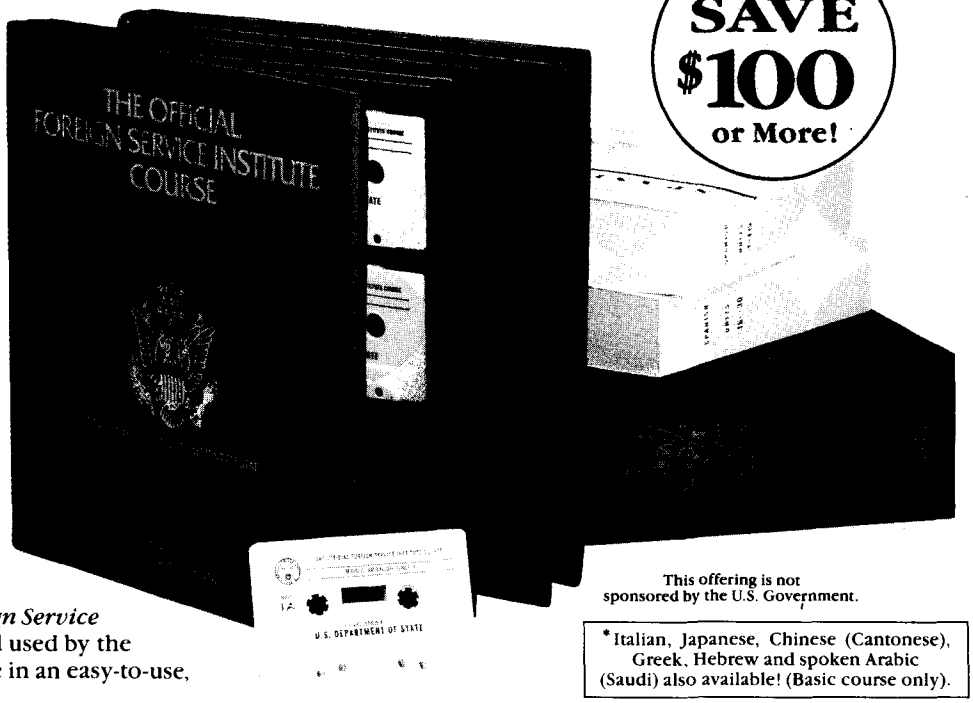

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then they have several times voiced their hope that on our next vacation we'll go someplace with more varied cuisine and a less picaresque past, like Cambodia or Miami.

JOE QUEENAN is a writer at *Barron's*.

The strained logic behind SDI Lite.

QADDAFI GOES BALLISTIC

By John Pike

With the passing from the political scene of Ronald Reagan, the Strategic Defense Initiative has become a solution in search of a problem. Too much money has been spent, too many contractors are at work, and too much ink has been spilled for everyone to admit that Star Wars was just one of those zany ideas that can catch the fancy of a president late one night and never let go.

This isn't to say that many people are talking seriously these days about Reagan's original idea—an impregnable space shield—or even about continuing SDI funding at its present level. In fact, President Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, are known to be Star Wars skeptics. But it's clear that the idea of a missile defense system will not die a quiet death. Star Warriors are now conducting a carefully calibrated retreat, abandoning Reagan's vision of a perfect defense and working their way through a series of increasingly modest alternative missions, such as defending against unauthorized or accidental launches and against attacks from Libya and other "crazy states."

The case for such a limited defense has gained bipartisan credibility, largely because Senator Sam Nunn has taken it seriously. Last year he raised the prospect of an Accidental Launch Protection System (ALPS) that would be small enough to necessitate no more than modest changes in the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Another reason ALPS is being taken seriously is that it's a political natural. Many conservatives, initially worried that a small anti-missile system would derail more ambitious plans, have sensed that the tide is turning against them and concluded that limited deployment is a good way of getting the camel's nose into the tent. Moderates of both parties, having been genuinely alarmed by Reagan's idea of a giant astrodome, are entertaining limited deployment as a welcome compromise. And longtime opponents of strategic defense, giddy over the apparent demise of SDI, have been slow to respond to SDI Lite.

So the next great strategic defense debate (which could commence any time after the administration and Congress settle on a new secretary of defense) will probably be over some variant of ALPS: a network of ground-based, not space-based, anti-missile interceptors numbering in the hundreds, not thousands. At least two good things can be said of such a program: it wouldn't be nearly as expensive as Reagan's Star Wars; and it wouldn't have that nagging, ironic side effect of Reagan's Star Wars—making nuclear war more likely by making mutually assured destruction less assured. Nonetheless, ALPS probably isn't worth the trouble.

To begin with, the threat of an unauthorized launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) turns out to be about nil. True to form, the Soviets have an absolute mania about maintaining control over their nuclear weapons. They follow the American practice of having two officers in each ICBM launch control center, both of whom must independently authorize a launch. But they go us one better: an additional pair of KGB officers must independently authorize the arming and release of the warhead. Further, American silo-sitters are technologically incapable of launching their missiles without a go-ahead from higher authorities, and few analysts doubt that the same is true for the Soviets.

The loose cannon scenario is a bit less farfetched in the case of submarine-launched missiles. Communications with submarines are unreliable, so American subs, and presumably Soviet subs, have the capacity to launch missiles without land-based authorization. They aren't *supposed* to launch on their own initiative, but they're physically capable of it. Still, on an American sub the concerted effort of several senior officers, at various stations, is required, and there is little doubt that Soviet procedures are at least as rigorous.

The main problem with the rogue submarine commander scenario as a rationale for ALPS isn't that it's not scary enough, but that it's too scary. If through some unfortunate and unlikely confluence of minds a Soviet submarine did attack the United States, it could unload a dozen missiles, with several hundred warheads—roughly the nuclear arsenal of France. To meet this threat with confidence, ALPS would have to consist of maybe a thousand, and certainly many hundreds of, interceptor missiles at several sites around the country. This is much grander than most ALPS systems now being talked about, and it would exceed the ABM Treaty's current limit of 100 interceptors at a single site. In political terms, this means it could strain the alliance of moderates and hawks that is the great hope of ALPS. In fiscal terms, this means it would be painfully expensive.

The other goal of ALPS, protection against missiles launched by mechanical accident, is less demanding. Since presumably only one missile would be accidentally launched, a smaller number of interceptors, perhaps as few as 100, would be needed (although these might have to be dispersed around the country, in violation of the ABM Treaty). But even people who spend lots of time thinking about nightmarish scenarios—Adm. William Crowe, for example, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—aren't too worried about an accidental launch.

And with good reason. Lots of things have to happen for a missile to fire. The chances of its leaping unbidden from its silo are about the same as the chances of a car starting itself up, opening the garage door, and backing out into the driveway without human assistance. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have deployed thousands of strategic missiles for the past three de-

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cades, without a single incident of accidental launch. The more common problem, to judge by test firings, is the failure of missiles to move when the countdown reaches zero. Of course, as they say, it only takes one. But even the annals of unarmed test missiles and target drones, which are subject to much less rigorous launch constraints, don't provide cause for concern. Alarmists have plenty of anecdotes about foul-ups with test missiles, but invariably these turn out to be stories not of unintentionally launched missiles, but of intentionally launched missiles straying off course. And the prospect of the Soviets trying to destroy Montreal and taking out Boston by mistake just isn't enough to warrant expensive preventive measures.

Are the superpowers' controls on their nuclear arsenals foolproof? Obviously not. Can more be done? Undoubtedly—especially in the case of submarines. But a call for a thorough review of such measures, conducted jointly with the Soviets, was the companion, though usually overlooked, element of Nunn's ALPS proposal. Before we spend billions of dollars to violate an ABM treaty that has contributed hugely to keeping nuclear deterrence stable, it might be worth spending a few thousand on plane fare to Moscow to discuss the alternatives.

All of this explains why ALPS proponents have seized on something scarier than an accidental launch, more evil than a rogue submarine commander, and roughly as odious as nuclear holocaust: Col. Muammar Qaddafi. They argue that Star Wars is America's only hope in a world of steadily proliferating long-range ballistic missiles and increasingly crazy dictators such as Qaddafi and the Ayatollah Khomeini.

The case for an anti-crazy-state missile defense system is superficially attractive even to some moderates. The spread of ballistic missiles to an ever widening circle of countries is recognized as a problem by national security specialists across the political spectrum. A Libyan or an Iranian missile force would be very small and probably would lack measures to counter a strategic defense. So an anti-crazy-state system might be squeezed into the existing ABM Treaty limits, and even Gramm-Rudman budget limits. That makes it the sort of compromise that could conclude the SDI debate (at least for the time being) without either side having to concede defeat.

But the fact is that the legitimate concerns about ballistic missile proliferation are concerns not about U.S. security, but about regional stability. Pakistan and India may aim nuclear weapons at each other. Israeli nuclear weapons may be pointed at Arab countries, and vice versa. And someday the same may be true for Brazil and Argentina, and for South Africa and neighboring African states. But none of these weapons are going to be aimed at the United States, because none could reach us. At least a dozen countries are trying to acquire missiles with ranges of hundreds of miles, but there is a huge technological difference between a five-ton missile capable of lobbing a chemical warhead across the border and a 50-ton missile that can toss a nuclear warhead over an ocean.

Qaddafi, in particular, shows no signs of seeking or attaining intercontinental ballistic missiles. The two dozen Scud-B ballistic missiles that Libya purchased from the Soviet Union in the 1970s had a range of only 300 kilometers. In 1988, after a decade of technological progress, Libya signed a $2 billion arms deal with Brazil that reportedly included the transfer of more military rockets. But their range is the same as that of the Scud-B.

The more disturbing cases are India and Brazil, both of which are working on solid-fueled satellite-carrying rockets that could be converted into ICBM-class rockets. Even here, there is little cause for immediate concern—and actually some cause for reassurance; the protracted research programs and the elaborate infrastructure that these countries have erected in their pursuit of ICBM-class rockets suggests that no crazy state could hide a program aimed at developing such missiles, and that the United States would have plenty of time to erect an ALPS in response.

India's first testing of its small 17-ton SLV-3 space booster took place in 1979, and two of the four flights failed. The 35-ton ASLV booster, which is basically three SLV-3s strapped together, failed in its first and second test launches, in 1987 and 1988. While either of these boosters could threaten Pakistan, neither has the range to threaten the United States. The much larger 275-ton ASLV could in theory deliver a nuclear warhead over intercontinental distances. But test launches of this booster, originally planned for 1988, have been delayed until the early or mid-1990s, while problems with the smaller rockets are straightened out.

Brazil's program has also followed a rocky road. In 1980 Brazil set out to develop a 50-ton VLS space booster, probably the smallest rocket that could threaten the United States. The VLS was going to launch a Brazilian satellite by 1986. The first step toward that goal was the successful flight in 1984 of the seven-ton Sonda IV rocket (which could get a half-ton payload as far as, say, Nicaragua). But the initial test of a one-third scale model of the VLS failed in December 1985, and the most recent flight of the Sonda IV, in October 1987, also ended in failure. Now the first flight of the VLS is expected no sooner than 1991.

The decade that a potential foe would apparently need to develop—conspicuously—missiles that could threaten the United States contrasts favorably with the three or four years needed to deploy ALPS in response to a third-country threat. Of course, Qaddafi, for instance, could always buy ICBMs instead of building them. But the Soviet Union and China are the only current sources of such intercontinental-range missiles, and they—like any other potential supplier—have an excellent reason not to sell them to Qaddafi or anyone else: any rocket capable of reaching the United States from the other side of the world is capable of reaching them, too.

Ultimately, much of this discussion is irrelevant. Even if a third nation succeeds in acquiring an ICBM—and succeeds, incidentally, in acquiring a nuclear capability, and mating the two—it will have to combine several other factors to constitute a threat to the United States: extreme hostility toward us, a leadership virtually im-

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mune to international opprobrium, and one thing more—a leader who is insane. Not just insane in the sense that this word is casually applied to some of our less stable world leaders, but insane in the clinical sense: prone to hear voices, say, or to engage in acts of self-mutilation. For any nation that lobs its three or four hard-earned nuclear missiles in the direction of the United States is likely to be literally annihilated within hours.

Though we might have once thought Qaddafi fell in this category, Ronald Reagan proved that he doesn't. The absence of a direct response to the 1986 bombing of Qaddafi's residential complex demonstrates that, although he is the closest thing to a bona fide nut case now gracing the stage of international relations, he is at bottom reassuringly like the rest of us; plausibly threatening to kill him and his family reliably gets his attention, a fact that makes him amenable to the logic of nuclear deterrence.

This gets at the one legitimately frightening nuclear scare scenario. Even if one grants that somehow Qaddafi gets the bomb—and even if one grants that he gets his hand on an ICBM— why should he try to deliver it in the one way that identifies Libya unambiguously as its source and therefore ensures his death? Isn't it much more likely that he would wrap his bomb in a bale of marijuana and fly it into the United States in a small plane?

While the first American atom bomb was a ten-ton leviathan that taxed the capacity of its B-29 bomber, today's nuclear weapons are more conveniently packaged. The W54 Special Atomic Demolition Munition, a one kiloton nuclear land mine, weighs 50 pounds and can be carried in a backpack. While it is doubtful that Qaddafi could build such a device, a Libyan bomb could weigh not much more than a thousand pounds and fit into a footlocker. And the development of a bomb, unlike the development of an ICBM, offers little promise of giving us lengthy advance notice. A light airplane could readily transport this bomb into the United States with little chance of detection. And a Chevy van could move the bomb into position on Wall Street, or near the White House.

So there may indeed be cause for alarm about the prospect of nuclear terrorism. But the action that is being discussed—building ALPS—won't help. Our effort, rather, should be toward more effective intelligence gathering and more effective international control of nuclear materials and other weapons technology. This effort should include the proliferation of ballistic missiles, but not—for now, at least—because of the threat they pose to the United States, but rather because of the threat they pose to American interests and allies.

Some of these allies may have reason to pursue something like ALPS. Israel has embarked on a $180 million project (largely funded by the United States) to develop a short-range anti-missile system, the Arrow. The concern is that even a few rockets armed with chemical warheads could temporarily ground the Israeli air force. This threat is clear, and an anti-missile defense is at least arguably an appropriate response. Neither claim can be made by the proponents of ALPS.

Of course, even the most vigorous opponent of Star Wars would retain a basic research program that could be readily converted into a missile defense system in the unlikely event that, say, Brazil started doing some credible rocket-rattling. But the prospect that an anti-missile shield will be needed in this century is so remote that there is no reason, other than political expediency, for proceeding soon with deployment of such a system. And political expediency is a lousy guideline for deciding what to do about the very real threats that people like Colonel Qaddafi pose.

JOHN PIKE is associate director for space policy at the Federation of American Scientists.

NICE GUYS

ST. BUDDY

By Michael M. Lewis

The tragedy of Buddy Roemer's 1987 campaign for governor of Louisiana was that he won. It's hard to imagine a job better designed to end a promising political career. The state had a deficit of about a billion dollars—the largest in its history—with no revenues in sight. Severance taxes on oil companies, which have paid for a giant state government since Huey Long took office in 1928 and carried out his vendetta against Standard Oil, were falling with oil prices. And Louisiana was running out of oil anyway.

It gets worse. Louisiana has rates of unemployment and illiteracy that are the highest in the nation. The electorate (like most electorates) lacks the stomach for budget tightening. And the state legislators are so used to selling their votes for pork barrel projects that any governor passing a bill for new taxes is likely to end up spending more than the bill took in.

So maybe Roemer, who began his campaign reluctantly, was angling to get beat. A sweet, noble defeat. Then, with his stickers fixed on the bumpers of cars from Shreveport to New Orleans, he could run for U.S. Senate. That would have given him the national platform he has always sought. Roemer, 45, sees himself as a reformer and future leader of the national Democratic Party. When he arrived in Washington for his first House term in 1980, he threatened to vote against Tip O'Neill for Speaker, thereby pissing off the entire Louisiana delegation. (O'Neill on Roemer: "often wrong, never in doubt.") Roemer finished his eight years in Congress as the Democrat with the best record of voting with Reagan.

Roemer's gubernatorial campaign strategy seemed like a sure loser. On the stump he seemed to delight in giving crowds the bad news. He compared Louisiana unfavorably with virtually every other state in the South,

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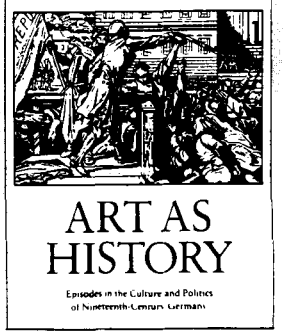

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including perennial cellar-dweller Mississippi, and told voters that they'd spend the next four years sweating to pay for the sins of the incumbent, Edwin Edwards, who had run the state for 12 out of the past 16 years. Moreover, in a state with no limits on campaign contributions—and where candidates are permitted to pocket any money left over from the race—Roemer refused anything over $5,000 from contributors. "There are two streams of thought in politics," he says. "One is do whatever it takes to win and then serve well. The other is that you will serve as you run. It's to the latter I subscribe." Roemer was up against a man who had spent $15 million to win in 1984. Had he been a boxer, he would have been accused of taking a dive.

About the only thing that Roemer seemed to offer voters was a vision, put across in a hick accent (he's a graduate of Harvard and the Harvard Business School but sounds like he never left Scopena, the Roemer family cotton plantation). "It's funny," he said, "I think Loosiana is at a crossroads. We could go along and get along and be the West Virginia of the 1980s and '90s—or we could make some changes and go down a different road and my kids'll go to school here. We could go down a different road and my kids'll get work here. We can go down a different road and everywhere you go in American people'll say, 'Hey, Loosiana, that's where it's happening.' " But most of his promises—to spend more on education, to change the image of the state, to attract industry—wouldn't pay dividends for years. Nobody was buying, at least not at first.

Weeks before the primary, in which Roemer faced three other Democrats, including Edwards, and a Republican, the polls showed idealism running a distant fifth with about eight percent of the vote. Roemer's support came mainly from his congressional district in the piney woods of the north of the state, where you can hardly hear the voice of Jimmy Swaggart through the din of Bibles being thumped. (Roemer says he once considered the ministry, but candidates have been taking those words out of Huey Long's mouth for years.) His campaign was flat broke and still refusing large contributions, which at that point was easy since no one was offering.

Then, three weeks before election day, it happened. All at once, by some miracle, the state's eight largest newspapers came out for Roemer. The Good Lord had delivered the people of the Great State of Loosiana from their oppressors.

Or maybe He didn't have much to do with it. It is widely believed—though not documented—that editors from the papers met one Sunday in Shreveport three weeks before the election and conspired to back a single candidate. Their chief concern was corruption. Roemer was the obvious choice. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* ran its plea for Buddy on its front page. It began: "We in Louisiana are as close to being down and out as at any time in our history, betrayed by a corrupt political system for which, in truth, we have mainly ourselves to blame."

Since that endorsement, Louisiana politics has been a farce in which a Truly Inspiring Man of Integrity crusades against a system that has been so rotten for so long that it refuses to believe what it sees: Mr. Smith goes to Panama. "In the last few weeks when it became clear I was going to win this thing, I had guys coming to me waving checks bigger than you ever saw," says Roemer.

Donaldson Lufkin & Jenrette, the New York investment bank that had underwritten several of the state's largest bond deals, has come to treat Louisiana politicians as if they were high-growth stocks. They rushed a man to the scene of impending victory with a sizable campaign contribution. "The guy wandered in and found himself sitting across from Buddy," says Ray Strother, a consultant to the Roemer campaign. "He left hurriedly—still holding his check."

The locals know better than to attempt to trade campaign contributions for favors with a man trying to win by being honest. "Oh no," says Roemer. "They'd say, 'I'm for good government just like you.' Or: 'Buddy, you my kinda guy, always have been, it's jes you bin busy the last few months and I hadn't been able to get this money to you.' " Even he couldn't blame them for trying. As one of Roemer's close advisers put it, "Reform has always meant getting the fat hogs out and letting the skinny hogs in." This time it was different.

To anyone from anywhere else, the m.o. of Louisiana politicians is shocking. But honesty has a bad name in the state. Brief flirtations with it, like the interregnum between Edwards's second and third terms, have met with bitter ends. A lot of people in Baton Rouge will tell you that graft is the lubricant without which the machine grinds to a halt. Edwards's right-hand man, Clyde Vidrin, wrote a scandalous memoir of the former governor's 1971 campaign called *Just Takin' Orders*. "Everything in the state had a value," he wrote. "Every board, commission, and department head's job was something to promise to raise campaign funds. As governor, Edwin Edwards would be able to make approximately 2,500 appointments. And each one of those appointments meant money in one way or another." Another man who worked with Edwards in Baton Rouge says, "Edwin was a genius at figuring out exactly what it was you wanted, and giving you so much of it you got sick. Then, when it came time for a vote in the legislature, and you tried to vote against him, he'd say, 'Hey, remember that pretty little girl I introduced you to . . . ' " In his defense, Edwards never pretended to be anything but what he was ("Hell's hottest fires burn for hypocrites," he once said, hopefully).

There's no shortage of theories about why Louisiana voters tolerate the rot. A holdover of decadent attitudes from prerevolutionary France. The heat. The spice in the food. The best guess is probably that people have never seen the bill for the corruption. The oil companies have. When the people gave Buddy Roemer 33 percent of the vote in the primary it probably wasn't because they had suddenly got religion, but because they had for the first time in a long while seen a decline in their standard of living.

Edwards, who ran second with 28 percent of the vote, conceded rather than face a runoff. This was probably bad for Buddy Roemer. A runoff could have given him at least an apparent mandate for reform. Without that,

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and given his unwillingness to use the most efficient tools for running Louisiana—bribery and blackmail—he was in a bind from the moment he won. As he stood on the platform over his cheering supporters, he turned to an aide and asked, "What do we do now?" He meant it as a joke. It wasn't.

He made some quick changes. He persuaded a reluctant legislature to reform campaign laws—now no individual can give more than $5,000 and politicians are no longer allowed to bank money they don't use. He raised teacher pay by five percent. He eliminated the long-standing biases in the laws favoring workers in worker compensation cases, and consumers in product liability cases.

But he soon ran into resistance. One early setback was the defeat of a bill to reduce the size of state government. A network of boards and commissions governs obscure sectors of the Louisiana economy. They exist primarily so the governor can appoint his supporters to them. There is in Louisiana, for example, a Board of Watchmakers. I was born and raised in Louisiana, I've traveled it widely, and I've never met a watchmaker. There are also State Boards of Electrolysis Examiners, Embalmers, and Barbers, and countless others, all obviously more powerful than the Board of Ethics of Elected Officials.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Roemer floated a bill that would have eliminated a mere 150 of the 2,300 governing bodies, but the legislature balked. It was a classic Louisiana paradox: to get the legislators' votes, Roemer needed to be able to promise them they could appoint their friends to the very jobs they'd be voting to eliminate. "Louisiana should be called the Big Shot State," one of Roemer's aides explained to me (the state is now known as the Sportsman's Paradise), "because everyone wants to be a Big Shot." He suggested I take a stroll through the parking lot in front of the state capitol to check out the rows of Cadillacs with long whip aerials on them.

Unable to get rid of them, Roemer instead investigated the Big Shots into submission. When he took office he appointed Louisiana's first inspector general, Bill Lynch, an investigative reporter with the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. Lynch and his team of auditors have issued 40 reports. They range from a scathing indictment of Louisiana's three black colleges (called the Southern University system, which Lynch says "exists for reasons of power, prestige, and patronage but not for education; they are places to make black people dumb") to a scathing indictment of the Commission on Used Motor Vehicles and Parts.

The used-car people are a good example of the potential for abuse on even obscure state commissions. In theory, they keep records of secondhand car sales, to ensure that dealers pay sales taxes. Lynch's auditors found that the records didn't exist. No records, no taxes. That's one way to win the support of used-car dealers. The commissioners themselves, like a lot of the state's quasi-officials, enjoy traveling. Lynch has had to explain to them that "we kinda frown on people taking the taxpayers' money and going off to Hawaii." One commissioner attended a meeting in Washington. The bill he handed the state seemed large. Lynch's auditors investigated. It turned out that the commissioner hadn't flown to Washington, but had driven. With his family. Slowly. The state had paid for the family vacation. What is more, the commissioner saw nothing wrong with it. "When we asked him why he drove his family up," says Lynch, "the man said, 'My family doesn't like to fly.' " At Lynch's suggestion, Roemer fired the entire Used Motor Vehicle commission.

But the most serious setback that Roemer has suffered is his inability to pass his tax reform bill. Without new money, the state faces a deficit this year of $685 million. Even with new money, Roemer will have to make draconian cuts ("With Edwards, we could just assume oil to be a couple of dollars higher in the budget, and presto, we'd have $80 million more," says budget director Steve Winham. "Now we don't do that.") The problem for Roemer is that law-abiding Louisiana citizens, knowing their politicians were likely to steal anything that wasn't nailed down, insisted long ago that laws be erected to stand between their pockets and the politicians' hands. Most new taxes re-

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quire a constitutional amendment. Since 1952 that has required a two-thirds vote of both houses of the legislature *and* a majority vote of the people. That hamstrings an honest governor just as effectively as it does a crook.

Roemer might be able to push his tax plan through if he spent less time schmoozing with his fellow governors and other national politicians and more time with locals who matter to him. He is accused—not unjustly—of arrogance, and of lacking an intuitive feel for the people he governs. Being both a crusader and a flag-waving, type-A graduate of Harvard Business School seems to limit his ability to deal with people who aren't. And it costs him.

The afternoon of our interview, Roemer provided a textbook illustration of how not to win friends and influence people. He was supposed to be in New Orleans at 1:45, seated in the front pew at a ceremony to install the new archbishop. He had been warned ad nauseam by his New Orleans advisers to treat the event with as much deference as he could muster. Any slip by a Methodist governor from North Louisiana at a Catholic service in South Louisiana was likely to be blown out of proportion. Despite the warning, Roemer outraged much of the Catholic south by showing up 20 minutes late and slipping through a side door. Worse, he had at his side a white man who just announced his plans to become the next mayor of New Orleans. When Roemer saw that there was no space for his friend, he asked the current mayor, Sidney Barthelemy, who is black, to move aside to make room. Then, just in case some thick-skinned New Orleans Catholic hadn't taken offense, Roemer committed a sacrilege by taking Holy Communion. The point is not just that Roemer angered the largest bloc of votes in the state legislature (the New Orleans delegation alone can torpedo one of his bills), but that he flunked Diplomacy 101 even though he had been given a crib sheet for the exam.

So Roemer may well stall out over the issue of tax reform. And by openly favoring big business while simultaneously cutting social programs and trying to raise taxes on the middle class, he has left himself wide open for 1992 and the knockout punch that has felled others before him: a populist in the tradition of Huey and Earl Long and Edwin Edwards, someone who stumps beside one of the bronze statues of Huey that litter the state and asks the people what this friend of the rich ever did for them. In a way, it would be Louisiana's loss if oil prices soared again, because they'd probably finance some slick-talking skinny hog looking to beef up.

That would be the end of Buddy Roemer. "After four years," he says, "if I feel in my heart that folks here don't believe in themselves, then I'm a loser. My job is to do enough show-me stuff, enough Missouri stuff." To kick out Buddy Roemer before he finished putting Louisiana on sound footing would be a shameful waste of a scarce unnatural resource: a politician willing to risk losing in order to do what is right.

MICHAEL M. LEWIS is the author of *Liar's Poker* (W. W. Norton), a forthcoming book about Wall Street in its golden years.

Pushing the limits of *glasnost*.

STALIN TAKES THE STAND

By Ernest Gellner

One of the crucial institutions in contemporary Soviet Russia is Memorial, an association dedicated to the commemoration and rehabilitation of the countless victims of Stalinism. Its legal status is still under discussion, but its position seems strong and it is said to have Gorbachev's support. The concrete aims of the association include the erection of a worthy memorial to the victims, the tracing of the fate of those whose disappearance continues to be clouded in obscurity, the securing of compensation for survivors and relatives, the establishment of a library containing all relevant documentation—and, in general, an attempt to engrave the horrors of the period on the national consciousness and conscience so firmly as to ensure that it can never happen again. A recent Memorial gathering featured entries submitted by sculptors, architects, and others to the competition for a suitable memorial. Families who lost kinsmen during Stalin's rule but remain ignorant of the circumstances had covered a wall of the meeting place with announcements, with photographs and biographical details, in the hope that they may be seen by someone who encountered the victim in some camp, and can provide information about his or her final years.

In the course of the discussions and debates that accompany all this activity, sooner or later some participant raises his voice to ask, Is it not time for an official repudiation of the horrors of the Stalinist period, not merely by a rehabilitation of the victims, but also by a

ERNEST GELLNER is a professor of social anthropology at Cambridge University.

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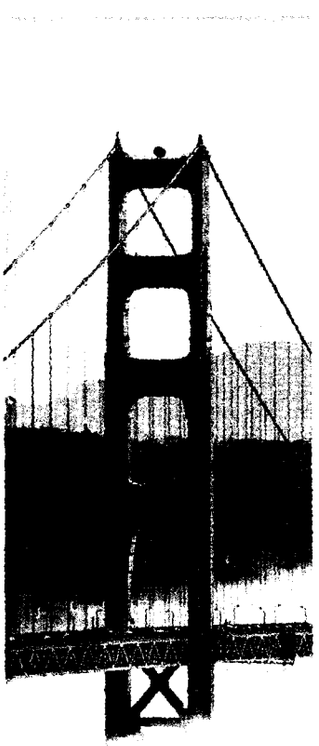

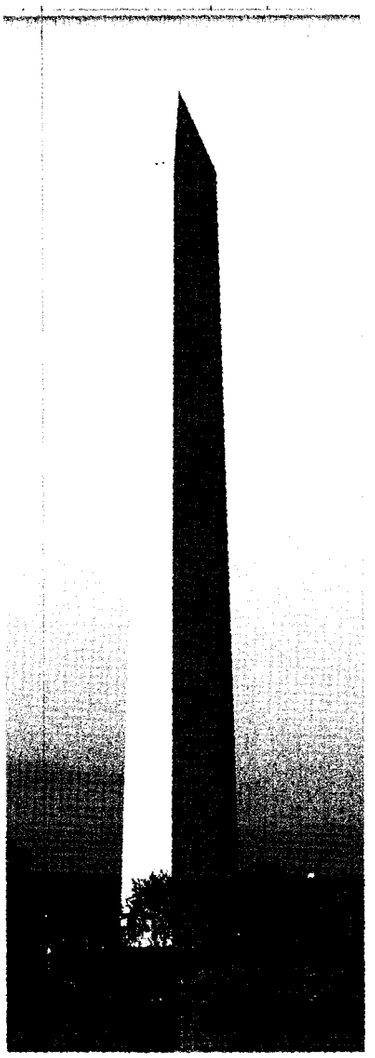

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trial of the perpetrators—including a posthumous trial of Stalin himself? Many of the henchmen are, after all, still alive. The request that such a trial be held has received support from an unexpected quarter. A man who had been active in the *prokuratura*, the equivalent of the state prosecutor's office, wrote an open letter saying he was tired of the chorus of denunciation of Stalin and of those who had served and supported him; their guilt has never been properly established in open court. Let it be so established, and let the voice of the accused also be heard! This letter voices the feelings of a segment of Soviet opinion. It also makes what is, after all, a valid point. Let the guilt and its nature and extent be properly established, with a critical scrutiny of the evidence. Even though the guilt is not seriously in doubt, such a formal legal inquiry would not be without both moral and historiographic value.

Should such a trial really be held? It is not for an outsider to Soviet society to dogmatize about a painful and tangled moral issue. But it is well worthwhile to spell out some relevant considerations.

The culprits who are still alive are aged people; three-and-a-half decades have elapsed since the days of total horror. Even though no one suggests the imposition of anything other than symbolic punishment and public exposure, there is something macabre about the trial of very old people by a much younger generation. (The one surviving member of the Politburo of the time is said to be utterly senile.) But there is a weightier consideration still.

In Nazi Germany the culprits and the victims were, all in all, distinct, allowing for some exceptions. The culprits carry the guilt of having been capable of perpetrating what they did, and the victims, the shame of having allowed it to be done unto them.

In the case of Stalinism, culprits and victims are not distinct. Indeed, the culprits of one stage are prominent among the victims of the next. It is the pure monsters and the pure heroes who are exceptional, though no doubt they do exist. The distinctive feature of the Stalinist horror is not merely its scale, but above all its random quality. People were packed off to the camps not just for trivial offenses (such as a single unauthorized meal with a foreigner), but equally for no offense at all. Certain very broad categories of the population that could potentially be sources of opposition were especially at risk: Ukrainian and/or prosperous peasantry, Party members, officers, bureaucrats, members of the police, intellectuals. But no one was safe, and, within the specially affected parts of the population, selection of victims was virtually random. One rule that sometimes operated was that anyone denounced three times was automatically arrested. Friendly policemen would on occasion warn acquaintances that they were gravely at risk because two denunciations had already been received, and advise them to move out of the area as quickly as possible.

Those not "repressed" were obliged to participate in an ever more hysterical reaffirmation of the moral excellence of the regime, and the turpitude of its victims. A typical newspaper headline of the time, reporting on the completion of a show trial, would read: "FOR DOGS, A DOG'S DEATH!" Festivals and social, intellectual, and cultural occasions went on at the same time with ever increasing intensity, and the survivors all took part. A distinguished intellectual told me that what *decent* people did at the time was to indulge in virulent denunciation of people *already* in the camps. Their fate, after all, was no longer in doubt, and such zeal in damning those already lost might with luck free one of the need of sending others, not yet lost, to perdition. It was those without decency who denounced people still at liberty.

The indistinguishability, in the main, of victims and culprits arises not merely from the fact that the culprits of one year became the victims of the next. (After all, as even his admirers admit, the newly re-sanctified Bukharin helped Stalin to eliminate Trotsky.) The indistinguishability arises above all from the fact that passive submission was not enough. Enthusiastic endorsement was a necessary (though certainly not a sufficient) condition of survival.

Moreover, the endorsement was not altogether or generally hypocritical. The age of fear was also an age of faith. Both faith and fear have now largely disappeared (faith presumably even more than fear). I have heard the observation that one difficulty faced by Gorbachev, in contrast to Khrushchev, was that the latter had inherited, for better and for worse, a disciplined society. The intervening period of stagnation and corruption eroded both fear and faith.

The faith was not altogether implausible. There is something to the idea that the inauguration of a radically new and superior social order—which is what the faith claimed it to be—should be sanctified in blood. The idea that the Land of the Revolution was surrounded by unscrupulous enemies, using internal subversion, and that it was in deadly peril is not absurd. In a certain sense, the horrors of that age are psychologically harder to bear in retrospect than they were at the time: then, victims could believe their own fate to be at least an unusual instance of injustice, and participants could believe that there was something necessary and ultimately valuable about the process. Only in retrospect do the appalling scale, the arbitrariness and pointlessness (or counterproductiveness) of the measures really become conspicuous and inescapable. At the time, there was a confident messianism that, incidentally, also promised to bring an eventual affluence. The intervening period of *zastoi* (stagnation) has eroded the messianism without bringing affluence. The third stage, *perestroika*, is endeavoring—ineffectively as yet—to bring about affluence with, incidentally, some recovery of faith. But it is not entirely clear what the faith is to be.

It is in this moral climate that the as yet hypothetical trial would have to be held. And it is here that the really painful moral dilemmas would have to be faced. It is not merely that the accused would be painfully old (assuming the trial would not restrict itself to the deceased), or that any attempt to draw a line between victims and culprits would soon face dreadful paradoxes. What is even more important is that, institutionally and doctrinally, it would be most difficult to draw a line around the bench of the accused.

First of all, the list of those unjustly and arbitrarily

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World Statement

From the International Committee for the Defense of Salman Rushdie and his Publishers (USA)

On February 14th the Ayatollah Khomeini called on all Muslims to seek out and execute Salman Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*, and those involved in its publication worldwide.

We, the undersigned, insofar as we defend the right to freedom of opinion and expression as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declare that we also are involved in the publication.

We are involved whether we approve the contents of the book or not. We appreciate the distress the book has aroused and deeply regret the loss of life associated with the ensuing conflict.

We call upon world opinion to support the right of all people to express their ideas and beliefs and to discuss them with their critics on the basis of mutual tolerance, free from censorship, intimidation and violence.

We request all world leaders to continue to repudiate the threats made against Salman Rushdie and those involved in his publication worldwide, and to take firm action to ensure that these threats are withdrawn.

Thousands of literary figures around the world have put their names to this statement. These are some of them:

Chinua Achebe, NIG
Fouad Ajami, USA
A. Alvarez, USA
Eric Ambler, UK
Yehuda Amichai, ISR
Babakh Amir-Khosravi, IRN
Kingsley Amis, UK
Martin Amis, UK
Michaelangelo Antonioni, ITA
John Ashbery, USA
Margaret Atwood, CAN
Julian Barnes, UK
Samuel Beckett, IRE
Suresrafil Behruz, IRN
Saul Bellow, USA
Carl Bernstein, USA
Clark Blaise, USA
Judy Blume, USA
Sidney Blumenthal, USA
Edward Kamau Brathwaite, BWI
Breyten Breytenbach, SAF
Andre Brink, SAF
Joseph Brodsky, USA
Robert Caro, USA
Noam Chomsky, USA
J. M. Coetzee, SAF
Catherine Cookson, UK
Avery Corman, USA
Don DeLillo, USA
Joan Didion, USA
Mohammed Djalali, IRN
Gojko Djogo, YUG
E. L. Doctorow, USA
Margaret Drabble, UK
John Gregory Dunne, USA
Ralph Ellison, USA
Nawal El Saadawi, EGY
Buchi Emecheta, NIG
Shusako Endo, JPN
Hans Magnus Enzensberger, GER
Fadia Faqir, JOR
Sylva Fischerova, CZE
Frances Fitzgerald, USA

Antonia Fraser, USA
Northrup Frye, CAN
Carlos Fuentes, MEX
Athol Fugard, SAF
John Kenneth Galbraith, USA
Allen Ginsberg, USA
Natalia Ginzburg, ITA
William Golding, UK
Nadine Gordimer, SAF
Mary Gordon, USA
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Graham Greene, UK
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Robert Haas, USA
David Halberstam, USA
Miklos Haraszti, HUN
Tahat Halman, TUR
Wilson Harris, BWI
Seamus Heaney, IRE
Joseph Heller, USA
John Hersey, USA
Hendrik Hertzberg, USA
George V. Higgins, USA
Christopher Hitchens, UK
Michael Holroyd, UK
Maureen Howard, USA
Irving Howe, USA
Eugene Ionesco, FRA
John Irving, USA
Kazuo Ishiguro, JPN
Iraj Jannatic-Ataie, IRN
Ryszard Kapuscinski, POL
Dhabiya Khamees, UAR
Frances King, UK
Galway Kinnell, USA
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Janos Kis, HUN
George Konrad, HUN
Jannis Kounellis, ITA
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Allison Lurie, USA
Manoocher Mahjoobi, IRN
Norman Mailer, USA
Anis Mansour, EGY
Robert Massie, USA
Don Mattera, SAF
Peter Matthiessen, USA
Claude Mauriac, FRA
Vladimir Maximov, USSR
Larry McMurtry, USA
Ved Mehta, USA
James Michener, USA
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repressed is not restricted to the time of Stalinism proper. No doubt, the list becomes incomparably greater and more arbitrary during that period. But victims did exist both before and after, and they did in some way genuinely oppose the regime, though their manner of so doing would in most cases make them safe in any system respectful of human rights.

Worse still, certain questions would inevitably be asked. Leaving aside the paranoia and cruelty of one man, what was it that made the horrors possible? What are the institutional and ideological preconditions of such horror? Who exactly forged the tools that made it possible?

The question would be asked: Is there a connection between the possibility of such terror and the monopolization both of truth and of political power? The idea of a self-selected charismatic Party, destined to be the agent of history in leading humanity to its liberation and fulfillment, and allowed, indeed obliged, to ignore dissent and destroy opposition in the execution of its sacred task—is that idea irrelevant? Does the idea that policy must be based not on the best available opinion, but on a Revelation that itself defined moral soundness, have nothing to do with the dreadful determination of the culprits, or the equally sad pliability of the victims of Stalinism?

The answers to these questions would not necessarily favor the dominant institution of this society. And that brings one to the greatest paradox and dilemma faced by liberalizers in this society, those who seek to replace the politics of monopoly of power, and of revelation, with the politics of realism and pluralism: What exactly is the present alternative?

Perestroika is largely about the restoration of civil society, more or less destroyed by 70 years of emphatic centralism. What ideas and sentiments are there that can reactivate other institutions and associations, and give them cohesion or confidence, and make them capable of realizing the ideal of law-bound government (officially endorsed) with an effective social base?

No one really knows the answer to this question. But the existing evidence is not reassuring. The one rival political sentiment that does seem capable of activating a cohesive and effective alternative is, for better or for worse, nationalism. It has made an open and virulent appearance in the Caucasus and along the Baltic. An observer recently returned from Armenia told me, with horror, that what really disturbed the Armenians most was not the harm the earthquake had done to Armenia, but the pleasure that, as many Armenians think, it gives to the Azerbaijanis.

Among Estonian activists, one is liable now to hear the phrase "The Party and the Nation are at one!" This is an old Soviet slogan, hung up as a matter of routine in red banners for the edification of the populace. It is now reaffirmed with an ironic smile: yes Party and Nation do indeed stand united. But not quite in the sense originally intended. Nationalism and national sentiment have captured the Party, not the other way around. Consider the example of the Estonian Supreme Soviet, which unanimously passed what was in effect a declaration of independence—subsequently squashed, legally, by the Supreme Soviet of the Union—that stated the Estonian Republic was in principle sovereign. National sentiment, and nothing else, seems capable of crystallizing that cohesion and trust that alone can engender an effective opposition to central and monopolistic institutions.

Chauvinism is by no means a monopoly of the republics, the minorities, the ethnics, so to speak. Everyone speaks of the Russian nationalist organization Pamyat, which carries on an informal but tolerated existence. In a period when the "informal organization" is of the essence to the attempt to restore a civil society and pluralism, it would hardly be appropriate to suppress it. Pamyat is a curious institution: it came into being originally for the protection of monuments. In English terms, it is as if the National Trust—a body dedicated to the preservation of the British architectural heritage—were to combine with the National Front—a body dedicated to exclusion of aliens—largely on the grounds that cosmopolitan Zionist architects with foreign names have destroyed the treasures of traditional architecture.

I have seen a couple of Pamyat publications. One of them contained a fairly standard sociological denigration of the Soviet system, pointing out that it is hard to interpret present society within the canonical Marxist typology of social forms. The other pamphlet contained a simpler line of reasoning: it just listed the ethnic background of the makers of the Revolution, noting that in this group one Georgian and a few Russians were swamped by a majority of Jews.

No one knows how strong Pamyat really is, and there is no real way of finding out. It is plausibly claimed that it has support among the bureaucracy. An intelligent, well-informed observer, with no tendency to paranoia, assured me that Pamyat was well organized and included a fighting organization training to take over public buildings.

At present, despite the astonishing freedom of speech (including the media), the effective authority of the Party remains unchallenged. The power structure is remarkably intact, imperiled only in some of the ethnic republics. So what would happen if a really dramatic trial of Stalinism effectively widened the question—asking not what individual, but what ideas and institutions, have made the terror possible? What could happen if the legitimacy of existing institutions really crumbled?

No one knows. But it is clear that the one effective alternative to the lost faith is nationalism. And it is at this point in the discussion that sincere and realistic liberals must start wondering whether they really want a public trial of Stalinism. The very institution that was its tool seems now to be the only protection from a worse alternative.

One observer confided to me that he was a follower of Jaroslev Hašek, the author of *The Good Soldier Švejk*. Hašek, as a joke, once stood for the Prague City Council, on the ticket of a party he himself founded, the Party for Mild Progress Within the Limits of the Law. Were I a Soviet citizen and obliged to take a stand, I suspect that I too might join the Hašekite movement. It may be the only way out. •

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Judgment day for S&L slimeballs.

WHEN HELL SLEAZES OVER

By Kathleen Day

Forget the lavish lifestyle of savings and loan executives in Texas and California—the trips to Europe in search of a good chef, the leather toilet seats, the $100 tips to waitresses in coffee shops. Forget the party where an officer at a now-failed S&L donned the costume of a king and served lion and antelope meat to guests. And forget the well-publicized attempts by congressmen—Jim Wright, Don Riegle, Fernand St Germain, Alan Cranston—to keep regulators from cracking down on S&Ls that spent their depositors' money this mindlessly.

These are just symptoms of a deeper regulatory failure during the 1980s, a failure that allowed the savings and loan crisis to grow in a few years from a problem of several billion dollars to one that will cost the public at least $157 billion over the next ten years and $230 billion over the next 30. By the time scores of S&L executives had started living like Leona Helmsley, and Wright and Riegle had started doing favors for them, the system was already hopelessly messed up. Thrift executives, lobbyists, lawmakers, and regulators were locked into a relationship so cozy that it was hard to tell (and it still is) where the industry ends and the government begins. Given the mutual interest most of these people had in keeping the S&L problem quiet, there was little chance that it would be checked before it approached apocalyptic proportions.

Space doesn't permit a detailed accounting of the sins of all these people. This is a shame, since so many of them—Republicans and Democrats alike—have such colorful histories of incompetence and corruption. Still, there's plenty to be learned by recounting the records of the cream of the crop—the dozen or so people who are most spectacularly culpable. There's therapeutic value in this, too; if we are really going to be paying for this fiasco for decades, it will be helpful to have a few handy receptacles for our wrath. Let's start at the beginning.

Frank Capra. Capra, unlike all the other people on the blame list, made only a slight contribution to the S&L crisis and an entirely innocent one. He merely created the film *It's a Wonderful Life*, in which Jimmy Stewart played the affable head of a savings and loan, a man motivated mainly by a desire to help his neighbors secure a home. The film both reflected and reinforced the apple-pie image of S&Ls that lobbyists have skillfully exploited to shield their industry from the sort of congressional and public scrutiny that could have exposed the S&L crisis in an earlier, less expensive phase.

Back when the movie was made, S&Ls were still devoted to encouraging homebuying in straightforward fashion. They matched customers who wanted to save long-term with homebuyers who wanted to borrow long-term. For performing this service, the thrifts were rewarded with a variety of subsidies. They occupied a cozy, government-controlled environment. There was a cap on the interest that S&Ls (and banks) could pay, the theory being that interest-rate wars were destabilizing. For years S&L executives lived by the 3-6-3 rule. Pay three percent for deposits. Lend the money to homebuyers at six percent. Play golf at three.

Today's S&L problems started in the late 1970s. Financial markets became more sophisticated as technology provided a wider array of investment instruments, such as mutual funds and money market funds. As stagflation hit the economy, interest rates rose, and these instruments started offering higher yields; banks and S&Ls saw depositors withdraw funds in the billions. Responding to cries for help, Congress lifted interest caps in 1980 so that S&Ls and banks could lure back lost deposits. In addition, federal deposit insurance was raised to $100,000 from $40,000, providing an added advantage. But the thrifts still found themselves in trouble. They had to pay much more to attract deposits than they were earning on their 30-year home loans, many of which were still yielding the low interest rates of the early 1970s.

The lobbyists: Richard Hohlt and James "Snake" Freeman. The thrift industry decided it needed more legislative relief, and the industry's largest lobby group, the U.S. League of Savings Institutions, went to work, with Freeman and Hohlt leading the way. (No one seems to know for certain why Freeman is called "Snake," though one theory naturally suggests itself and seems to have occurred to almost everyone who knows him.) The league's goal was further deregulation. To recoup the high interest rates thrifts could now pay, they wanted to expand beyond home loans, into riskier, potentially more profitable, investments: consumer credit cards, commercial real estate developments, etc. The desired legislation would blur the distinction between banks and S&Ls by allowing thrifts to do just about everything banks could do. But it would also preserve the long-standing distinction that entitles S&Ls to tax breaks and other subsidies.

KATHLEEN DAY is a *Washington Post* staff writer.

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Never mind that those subsidies had originally been granted in exchange for the industry's promise to focus on providing home loans, a promise that this legislation would go a long way toward breaking.

The stooges: M. Danny Wall and Fernand J. St Germain. The league focused its efforts on two people in particular: St Germain of Rhode Island, chairman of the House Banking Committee, and Wall, then the chief banking aide to Senator Jake Garn of Utah, the chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. Wall—who, ironically, has a reputation for being bad with numbers—is now chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, which is charged with regulating the S&L industry. His performance in this role alone might be enough to condemn him to S&L hell, but his contribution to the S&L crisis began back when he was advising Garn. This is the job that earned him the attention of the league's lobbyists.

Hohlt went to work on Garn, or more accurately, on Wall, with whom Hohlt is still a close friend. Hohlt's number became the first one listed on Wall's Senate speed-dial telephone. (As bank board chairman, Wall continues to confer frequently with Hohlt, sometimes several times a day.) While on Garn's staff, Wall earned a reputation for accepting all-expenses-paid trips from the league and other lobby groups. A few of years ago a reporter examined the disclosure statements of top congressional staffers and found that Wall led the pack in lobbyist-subsidized junkets, with 30 in a single year.

St Germain turned out to be amenable to subsidy as well. Snake Freeman gave him free use of charge accounts at restaurants around town, and the two men became regular dinner partners. If someone needed to find one of them after business hours, he was told to try the Prime Rib restaurant on K Street. Freeman also provided St Germain with golfing trips and sometimes arranged late-evening entertainment for the congressman. The legislation that the league sought was passed in 1982 as the Garn-St Germain bill.

The revolving-door regulators: Richard Pratt and Thomas Vartanian. Congress was not alone in granting relief to the thrift industry in 1982. Pratt, then the bank board chairman, and Vartanian, the board's chief counsel, initiated new, lenient accounting rules after the league insisted that S&Ls squeezed by interest rates needed time to grow out of their problems. The new rules masked losses and overstated profits, thus preventing government regulators from closing money-losing thrifts whose net worth—an S&L's cushion against loans going sour—was plummeting. Industry losses continued to mount.

In 1983 Pratt stepped down from the bank board to take a job as head of the mortgage-backed securities department at Merrill Lynch. His ties to the bank board didn't hurt the firm's ability to garner government business. Vartanian left to become a partner in the law firm of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, where he brings in millions of dollars a year representing people who want to buy or sell S&Ls that fell into trouble because of the very policies he advanced. His government connections don't hurt, either.

We pause to mention a would-be hero: Edwin J. Gray. Appointed by the White House to replace Pratt was Gray, an S&L executive from California who had been a top fund-raiser for Reagan. League President William O'Connell thought he had a puppet in Gray. The league had worked hard for Gray's appointment, drawing on Hohlt's longtime friendship with Craig Fuller, chief of staff for Vice President George Bush.

As bank board chairman, Gray did at first remain close to the industry. He conferred with O'Connell frequently, and was only too happy to accept thousands of dollars in travel and entertainment expenses from the league and the S&L industry as he crisscrossed the country to make speeches to thrift executives. (It is hard to say exactly how unethical this was, because much of this money came from the 12 Federal Home Loan Banks, weird institutions that have quasi-governmental status but are funded by the S&L industry and run by a board of directors made up almost entirely of S&L executives.)

As close as Gray was to the industry, he was not blind to the mounting evidence that deregulation had backfired. The new investments S&Ls were making in real estate and other areas were riskier than anything they were used to, and many of them were going bad. Still, the losses weren't overly painful to S&L executives; there was always the government-backed $100,000 deposit insurance to pick up the pieces. The resulting syndrome became known as the moral hazard problem: deposit insurance was no longer only bolstering confidence among savers; it had become a license for S&L executives to gamble on fast growth and easy profits using government-guaranteed funds.

Wild growth at S&Ls was fueled by "brokered deposit" blocks of $100,000 that are wholly covered by federal deposit insurance and pulled by professional money managers in and out of institutions depending on which offers the highest rate. As S&Ls lost money on bad investments, they offered higher and higher rates to attract brokered funds that they then would desperately invest in even riskier ventures. And so on. By the time the curtain was drawn on some Texas S&Ls, more than 90 percent of their loans had gone sour.

By 1984 Gray could see that the S&Ls' problems had shifted fundamentally. The thrifts were no longer just losing money on low-yielding loans they had made in the early 1970s. They were losing money on the high-risk loans—which often turned out to be no-yielding—permitted by the Garn-St Germain act. And thanks to the revised accounting rules, they had little capital cushion to absorb the losses. Gray began to break with league policy by saying publicly that hundreds of ailing S&Ls, far from growing out of their problems, had become more troubled and would soon need a government bailout from the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, the bank board fund that insures deposits. He warned that the mounting failures could bankrupt FSLIC and jeopardize the entire S&L industry if not curbed. But that would require more examiners, something the Garn-St Germain act hadn't provided. "The list of horror stories resulting from the misuses of brokered funds by desperate financial institutions is growing as the weeks and months go on," Gray told Congress in 1984. "We are facing a potentially acute

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shortage of examiners. . . . Simply put, a large number of institutions have taken in more funds than can be safely employed in prudent lending, resulting in growth which is almost uncontrollable. . . . We . . . are seriously understaffed."

The thrift industry did everything it could to shut Gray up. One S&L executive from California, Charlie Keating, hired several top law firms to leak reports about Gray's acceptance of travel and other gifts from the league. The ensuing publicity embarrassed Gray and undermined his credibility, as intended.

The attack dog: Frank Annunzio. Democratic Representative Annunzio of Illinois, who has been close to the league for years and represents the congressional district in Chicago of O'Connell, longtime president of the league, helped put the strong-arm on Gray. Annunzio's chief banking aide, Curt Prins (known around Capitol Hill for his unflattering remarks about Jews and other ethnic groups), threatened that Gray would not be able to get a job after his bank board term expired if he didn't stop talking about the industry's problems.

All of this took its toll on Gray. Several Washington reporters have had the experience of receiving a call from him while they're on deadline and simply letting him talk to himself while they worked. It was even possible to set the phone down and come back minutes later to find him still ranting (accurately) about the folly in the S&L system.

Gray's growing reputation as something of a wild-eyed fanatic on the subject of S&Ls, combined with the embarrassing disclosures about his ethical shoddiness, made him a man who was easy to ignore. Neither Congress nor the Reagan administration's Office of Management and Budget used its authority to increase the number of examiners as Gray requested. It is clear in retrospect that following his advice would have saved the nation tens of billions of dollars.

See no evil: Don Regan. Regan, treasury secretary during Reagan's first term and chief of staff during his second, was well situated to perceive the S&L crisis and do something about it. He was also well situated to stifle reform by pretending the problem didn't exist. He took the latter path. Regan (whose tenure as chief of staff includes such other highlights as the Iran-*contra* scandal) became infuriated with Gray's requests to beef up enforcement and developed an intense dislike for him. He argued that increasing the examination staff would be tantamount to reregulating the industry—anathema to free-market-minded Reaganites. Today it is clear that Regan confused regulation with supervision; Gray wasn't asking for more regulation, just more policing to enforce the existing regulations. One of the most important lessons of the S&L mess is that sometimes deregulation calls for stronger federal oversight.

Spokesman for the bag men: Larry Taggart. In addition to his devotion to deregulation, Regan had another reason

Moral Hazard

President Bush has decided that if the government is going to clean up the mess left by savings and loan associations, the least it can ask is that they not repeat their performance. So, along with his plan to raise money for the S&L bailout, he proposes to boost the S&Ls' capital requirements from three percent of assets (which are roughly equal to deposits) to six percent. But Bush's plan won't cure the thrifts of the bad business practices that got them into their current predicament. What's needed for that is a radical revision of the role of federal deposit insurance.

The agencies that insure banks (the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) and S&Ls (the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation) were set up in the 1930s to restore public confidence and stop panicked runs on deposits. The system worked well at first. Like most insurers, the FDIC and FSLIC had very little money of their own—normally only a few billion dollars. But they had behind them the implicit guarantee of the U.S. government.

The original FDIC provided coverage that sounds a little like today's health insurance: full protection of the first $10,000 lost per depositor, then 75 percent coverage on the next $40,000, and 50 percent coverage on everything over $50,000. As the years passed, the fractional coverage was phased out, and the limits rose in nominal if not real terms. In 1980, during an earlier S&L crisis (caused by high interest rates), Congress jacked up insurance coverage by the FDIC and FSLIC to $100,000 per deposit. But the truth is that the government's commitment is higher than that. Ever since the Continental Illinois bailout of 1984, it's been generally understood that even deposits above the $100,000 limit are covered.

Can the current system really insure the country's $3.5 trillion in total deposits? Sure, as long as the insurance agencies have access to the Federal Reserve Board's magic money machine. And they do, as demonstrated by Bush's plan to raise money for the S&L bailout through bond issues. But this isn't the right question. More important is whether the current system encourages bankers to take excessive risks, whether it produces what the insurance business calls "moral hazard." The answer, here too, is certainly yes.

"Moral hazard" illustrates the paradox of insurance, which is that it can encourage insured people to act recklessly. If you know you'll be paid in full by the insurance company when your $3,000 Rolex is stolen, you'll be marginally less careful about its security. This is precisely the problem with deposit insurance. It leaves banks and S&Ls free to make reckless loans, confident that they'll be reimbursed for the ones that go sour. It not only turns bankers into gamblers, but provides them with unlimited funds to indulge their

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to resist attempts to crack down on industry abuses—the loss of GOP campaign contributions from S&L executives. Taggart, a former S&L commissioner of California, wrote in a letter to Regan dated August 4, 1986, that "these actions ... by [Gray] are likely to have a very adverse impact on the ability of our Party to raise needed campaign funds in the upcoming elections. Many who have been very supportive of the Administration are involved with savings and loans associations which are either being closed by the [bank board] or threatened with closure."

Wild Bill O'Connell. Many lobbyists, to help themselves sleep at night, live by a simple ethical stricture: be selective in your citation of facts, even stretch the truth if necessary, but never lie. That was not League President O'Connell's way. Late last year, when he retired as president, O'Connell was still insisting publicly that the bank board's deposit insurance fund had adequate resources to close or sell hundreds of ailing S&Ls, even though the General Accounting Office and private analysts had for years been declaring the fund hopelessly insolvent. In fact, privately O'Connell had been warning S&L executives about the crisis facing the fund. According to Gray, former league officials, and former members of the Reagan administration, the purpose of this deception was simple: if the league could delay the government's attempt to tackle the problem, the cleanup costs would soon become so large the industry couldn't afford it, and taxpayers would get the bill instead. Delay increased the cost of the bailout by more than $1 billion a month.

Would-be heroes two and three: James Baker and George Gould. Despite Regan's efforts to ignore the problem, some Reagan officials understood its seriousness. In early 1986 Treasury Secretary James Baker proposed a $15 billion bailout plan to be funded by the S&L industry. If adopted, it would have gone a long way toward a solution. But the U.S. League, still unwilling to let the scope of the industry's problem become public, lobbied to reduce Baker's bailout package to $5 billion, insisting that was all that was needed. Lobbyist Hohlt's willingness to understate the size of the problem before Congress and the public became so odious to some in the Reagan administration that for over a year he was banned from entering the office of Undersecretary of the Treasury George Gould, who spearheaded the White House bailout plan.

Jim "money talks" Wright. Wright joined the U.S. League in trying to stall the bailout package. In Texas, S&Ls were big contributors to the Democratic Party, and had long had Wright's ear. Lately a couple of financially troubled Texas thrifts had complained to him about the oppressive scrutiny of bank board examiners. He decided to use the threat of sitting on the bailout package as leverage to get Gray's policemen to back off. Wright delayed action on the bailout until the fall of 1987, when he OK'd compromise legislation providing $10.8 billion in new funding for the bankrupt S&L insur-

habit. Insurance insulates the depositors, too, from the consequences of bad judgment; they don't have to worry about the soundness of the banks and S&Ls in which they leave their money.

Without federal insurance, in contrast, word would get around very quickly that some banks were shaky; depositors would stay away, and the banks would shortly be out of business. That's clearly bad news for the unwary depositors who signed on with the banks, but good news for the financial system as a whole. As things now stand, bad S&Ls have grown spectacularly, leaving a huge mess to clean up.

Of course, the biggest problem with an insuranceless banking system is its volatility. In periods of uncertainty about the system's health—such as now—uninsured deposits flow out rapidly, and the whole structure can collapse in short order. The problem is how to balance the need to give Americans confidence in the banking system and to protect unsophisticated depositors, on the one hand, with the need to decrease the moral hazard of depositor insurance and get banks to act responsibly.

It's theoretically possible to reduce moral hazard through regulation, but this is a nation of thousands of banks—the most decentralized financial system in the world—and it would take a huge army of examiners to spot all, or even most, reckless behavior. Higher capital requirements are certainly part of the solution, but banks have so much say in when and how they take losses that capital is a largely subjective figure.

The best solution would be for the federal government to provide only limited insurance: say up to $50,000 per depositor per bank or S&L (not per *deposit*, the way it works now). That would certainly be enough to protect small, unsophisticated investors. Then there would be partial coverage, perhaps 50 percent, up to $200,000. Private deposit insurers would probably take up most of the slack, so the system wouldn't be markedly more susceptible to runs than it is now. And the private insurance carriers, by carefully checking up on each bank before selling it insurance, would provide some of the scrutiny that federal regulators are supposed to provide.

This system would put a premium on strength and a strong track record. It would encourage banks to tout their hefty capital footings and their stability. Today, a bank that's financially strong is a sucker. It won't pull in more deposits at a lower interest rate than a weak bank, and it probably won't make as much money either, since it uses its capital as a reserve, rather than lending it out. Given this strong incentive for irresponsible management, it's a wonder the S&L system didn't fall apart decades ago.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

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ance fund. It was too little too late.

This past January Bush announced that massive funds will be needed to clean up the industry. Amazingly, the league is contending that the government and not the industry should bear the blame for and full cost of the disaster. It is worth noting, as Gray did during congressional hearings a few weeks ago, that "when it came to thrift matters in the Congress, the U.S. League and many of its affiliates were the de facto government. The league's consuming strategy was to buy time and buy time and buy time, and if enough time was bought, if the disaster was permitted to get big enough, so that only the taxpayers could pay the bill, its members would have been well-served." Gray added, "The folks at the league told me this was the strategy, not once, but on a number of occasions."

Danny Wall rides again. In July 1987 Gray's term expired. Reluctantly, and only at the urging of Garn and the U.S. League, President Reagan appointed Wall to take his place. Wall took advantage of the opportunity to do a series of embarrassing things. First he extolled the success of the disastrous 1982 Garn-St Germain act. Then last year, though the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation was clearly bankrupt, Wall committed it to pay $6,000 to the Jake Garn Institute, a think tank being set up (by former bank board chairman Richard Pratt and others) at the senator's alma mater, the University of Utah. When asked about the donation, Wall replied, "So?"

Wall's tenure as chairman is strewn with denials of how big the S&L problem really is. Eighteen months ago he said it would take $16 billion to clean up the industry and that no tax money would be needed. A few months later he raised the estimate to $32 billion, then a few months later to $50 billion. The Treasury Department was quietly citing estimates twice that. Officials at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures deposits at commercial banks, began referring to Wall as M. Danny Isuzu.

George Bush and his predecessor. Why would Danny Wall downplay the crisis to the extent of undermining his own credibility? Here's a hint: he quit doing it shortly after the presidential election; suddenly, with George Bush's victory secure, Wall's S&L cleanup estimates miraculously matched the Treasury's much more alarming figures. Wall wasn't alone in keeping things quiet until after November. In between the agreement on the hugely inadequate FSLIC bailout of August '87 and George Bush's election in November '88, the administration avoided prominent discussion of the S&L problem.

Maybe you could argue that Ronald Reagan isn't to blame, because he didn't deeply understand the issue (the all-purpose Reagan alibi), but the same certainly can't be said about Bush. Bush had several years earlier chaired the administration's task force on financial deregulation, which closely examined the problems of thrifts and banks. And the author of the committee's report, Richard Breeden—one of the most astute analysts of the S&L mess around—has for some time been in Bush's circle. In fact, Bush chose him last summer to fashion a solution to the problem, even as Bush was saying nothing publicly about it and was, moreover, blithely assuring us that the budget could be kept under control without a tax hike. During Bush's virtual moratorium on discussion of the S&L crisis—from August 1987 until January of this year—the cost of cleaning the mess up grew by at least $20 billion, maybe $30 billion. But that's nothing compared with Reagan, who went eight years without ever mentioning the problem publicly.

The bailout plan Bush unveiled three weeks ago includes a farseeing reform package that, if adopted, would move toward the eventual elimination of the distinction between thrifts and banks. At the same time, it would create the new position of S&L czar within the Treasury Department, and the Bush administration has promised Wall that if Congress agrees to the plan, he'll get the job. Most people in the FDIC (which under the plan would regulate thrifts as well as banks) aren't keen on that idea—and, neither, for that matter, are many people in the Bush administration. They're offering Wall the new job for one reason only: they need Jake Garn's support on the bailout.

The PACmen: Annunzio, Don Riegle, Alan Cranston. The U.S. League, rightly afraid that the Bush plan will weaken its control over S&L regulators (that's the whole idea), recently asked the White House to consider providing the bailout money now and leaving any restructuring for later. The administration said no. So the lobby group has launched a campaign against Bush's plan, and has turned for support to its many allies on the Democratic side of the House and Senate. In particular, it is happy to count in its corner such old friends as Senator Riegle of Michigan, Representative Annunzio, and Senator Cranston of California—all of whom, along with such other notables as Jim Wright, belie the simplistic idea that the S&L fiasco was nothing more than a regulatory failure by a Republican administration.

What else do these three men have in common? Various connections to the thrifts, among them that all three have benefitted from the industry's ample political action committees. Another unifying theme: strange ideas about the nature of the S&L problem. Annunzio wants to preserve the S&L industry virtually without change, regardless of the fact that it is no longer succeeding in its original role as a conduit for government subsidies to homebuyers. Today the percentage of young American adults who can afford a first home is lower than it's been in a decade, and S&Ls make only 40 percent of all home loans, compared with 58 percent just a decade ago.

Luckily for taxpayers, St Germain is no longer around to throw in his two cents. The Justice Department's investigation of thousands of dollars in dining and other entertainment expenses—which the representative accepted from Freeman and other league officials but did not report, as the law requires—so tainted him that he lost his bid for re-election last fall.

But Danny Wall, that hardy perennial, is still around and promises to be in the thick of things for years, if not decades, to come. Wall was asked not long ago who was responsible for allowing the crisis to grow for so long. "The point isn't whose responsibility it is," Wall said. "That's all history." •

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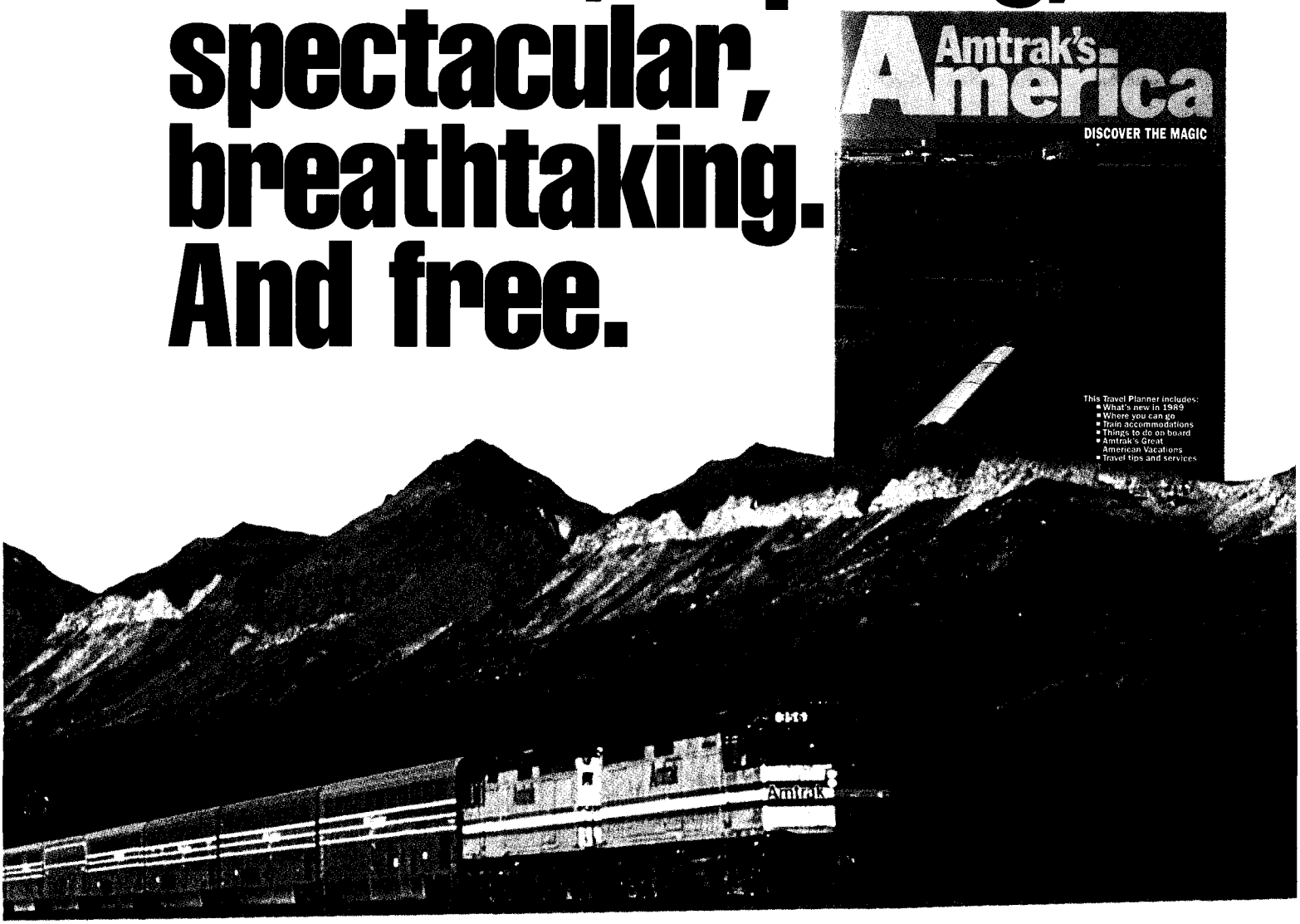

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Light Foot, Heavy Hand

It takes a certain skill to enjoy *Tap* (Tri-Star), but it's one that most of us have. We need to be able to disregard everything in it but the musical numbers. Not many musicals on stage or screen are interesting outside their music, and *Tap* is no exception. I'm puzzled that so much of the comment on the picture has stressed the weak book, as if this were a departure from form. The dance numbers are its sole reason for existence; and they're enough.

Among musicals *Tap* has a special appeal: nostalgia. Tap dancing never completely disappeared, but it certainly has moved out of the public eye—into a sort of historical position. *Tap* asks us to long for the past, whether we knew it or not, and to appreciate what has been obscured. The film treats its dancing as a nearly lost art, or at least a debased one, and especially through the presence of some surviving old-timers, it makes a strong case for restitution. "Rock and roll killed us," sighs one of the veterans. But it didn't, quite, and it won't, says the picture.

It's worth saying. Tap dancing was one of the mainstays of Broadway musicals until the arrival of *Oklahoma* in 1943; its use since then has increasingly had a memory-lane flavor. Any good vaudeville bill included a tap-dancing act. It has always delighted me—its teasing rhythms, the humorous ease with which the best people did the incredible. I stake a long-time claim in my affection: one of the first things I ever published was a poem—even if only a high school boy's poem—about Bill "Bojangles" Robinson.

Bojangles is long gone, but some of the people who must have learned from him are in *Tap*: Jimmy Slyde, Steve Condos, Bunny Briggs, Arthur Duncan, Pat Rico, Harold Nicholas, and Sandman Sims. All of them get to dance a little, exquisitely, so the film has some of the value of a museum of a (predominantly black) popular art. Sandman Sims also has a considerable role; he's delightful as a horn-goggled old grouch who dislikes everything that's going on today. Even if it's tap dancing, he thinks the steps were stolen from him.

Sammy Davis Jr. is much on hand, no less gooey but somewhat more tolerable. He plays an older friend of the hero's and dances just a bit. The hero is Gregory Hines, who dances a lot. He's very good indeed, though he doesn't threaten my memories of the best before him. One difference between him and the best is that he dances only with his feet. This becomes obvious when he and his girlfriend do a brief bit of an Astaire-Rogers number, "Cheek to Cheek" from *Top Hat*. The moment Hines raises his arms for the opening position, we see that, unlike Astaire and Robinson but much like Gene Kelly, his lightness is only in his feet. Everything else is heavy.

The story? Well, let's just say it's about an ex-dancer who became a burglar and served a term and after release is tempted to return to his life of crime but takes a job washing dishes and also visits a dance studio where old tap dancers hang out and where he re-meets an old girlfriend (the charming Suzzanne Douglas) and her young son and her grandfather (Davis) who wants him to go back into dancing with him. Each of the five or six plot lines has its own tension and climax—or would like to have. Nick Castle, who wrote the script, directed, and handled the dance numbers competently.

One number, a real throwback, needs special mention. Hines takes a group of admirers out of a Broadway club into Times Square and demonstrates how he gets his rhythms from street sounds: a bus bumping over a pot hole, a taxi horn, a jackhammer, and so on. Soon everyone has joined him in the dance, passers-by, ditchdiggers, bootblacks, etc. I never thought I'd see that sort of everybody-dance number again.

I don't know how much *Tap* cost, but *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (Co-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

High Hopes. *Slices of London life. A pair of prole lovers, politically stranded without the revolution they hoped for, their relatives, some others. Sometimes a touch cartoony but mostly done with grim wit and bitter truth. (Reviewed 3/13/89)* **Lawrence of Arabia**. *Restored and re-recorded. So splendid that it exists independently of historical data as many classic historical plays do. The screenplay falters slightly in Part Two, but the filmmaking is always superb. (2/20/89)* **Pelle the Conqueror**. *Max von Sydow is excellent as a Swedish farmhand in Denmark, c. 1890, rearing his son to outgrow him. The contours and courses of an old-fashioned novel (which it was). (1/23/89)* **True Believer**. *A New York civil rights lawyer, burned out, recovers his spirit in a drive to free a wrongly imprisoned man. A murder mystery and a legal tangle, some sharp dialogue and some good twists. (2/13/89)*

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lumbia) reportedly cost $40 million. Funny how we never think of the expense when a film holds us, but how waste oppresses when the picture palls. *Baron Munchausen* palls, and appalls, almost from the beginning; so it drags along under a surreal image of money flowing down a drain.

There *was* such a baron, apparently, an 18th-century German who had an exciting military and exploring life, then later regaled his guests with tall tales. The name became a synonym for an amiable fantastic fibber. (In the 1930s a vaudeville and radio comic named Jack Pearl used to tell such stories and called himself the Baron.) Several German authors wrote novels about the Baron, and now there's a screenplay by Charles McKeown and Terry Gilliam. If the screenplay were all there were on the subject, he would soon be forgotten.

Gilliam, who directed, is the former member of Monty Python who made *Time Bandits* (largely witty) and *Brazil* (largely not) and continues to decline. The basic trouble here is that Gilliam and others never decided whether the film was for children or grown-ups or even for both groups. Result: it's for no one. It's a long, laborious mixture of dull escapades, wearisome sexual innuendos, trite space-travel special effects, and F.A.O. Schwarz battles. Hundreds of people were employed in this torpid account of an attack by Turks on an unnamed city in the 18th century, monsters were built, horses and elephants lugged into service, and we can only sit there wondering how so many filmmakers could have slogged on so long without a clue about what they were doing or why they were doing it.

One asset is the cinematography by the excellent Giuseppe Rotunno, but its misuse here is obscene. Jonathan Pryce, John Neville, Bill Paterson, Eric Idle (of Month Python), Oliver Reed and—saddest of all—Valentina Cortese are also visible in this barren enterprise.

Every person in the United States went to a film theater more than four times in 1988. So reports Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America. The per capita average of 4.4 compares with Great Britain, 1.4; Canada, 2.8; Italy, 1.6; West Germany and France, each 1.9. With the United States and Canada in the lead, does this show a correlation between a country's acreage and its film-going?

Two other statistics are encouraging. First, the over-40 age group is buying a larger share of the total admissions. Two years ago the over-40s bought 14 percent, in 1988 22.3 per-

STEVE JANGER, like many American college students, took a year of his studies abroad to experience other cultures first hand. By the time he returned home to Oklahoma, Steve had developed a new understanding of the role personal experience plays in the learning process.

Today, Steve Janger is president of the Close Up Foundation, which brings over 27,000 students and teachers to Washington, D.C. each year for face-to-face meetings with national leaders. When it comes to learning, Steve still holds his belief in the importance of personal experience. How else can he explain the new looks of understanding on thousands of young faces after they encounter the process of government first-hand and realize that they can make a difference?

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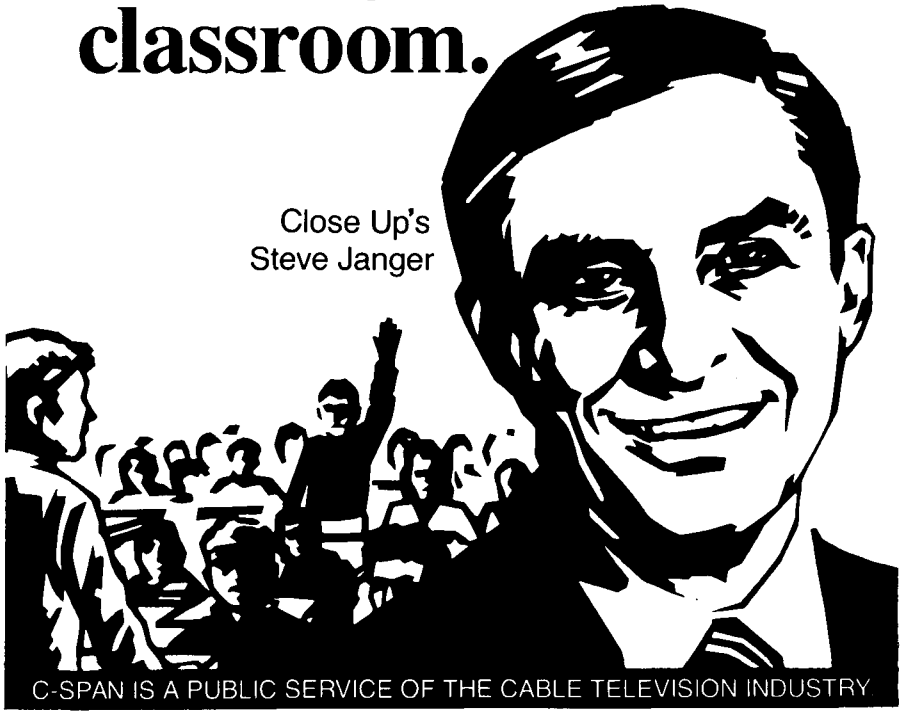

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cent. Second, although print and advertising costs continued to rise, the average cost of actually making the film—the "negative cost"—fell to $18.1 million from the previous year's $20.1 million. Let's hope these figures mean that, first, high school pictures will decrease proportionately and, second, that creative venturousness will increase by ten percent.

The peculiar martyrdom of Dmitri Shostakovich.

The Opera And The Dictator

BY RICHARD TARUSKIN

In the days following Dmitri Shostakovich's burial in August 1975, a story went around Moscow of a bearded stranger who elbowed his way through the crowd of mourners at the bier until he stood right between the composer's widow, Irina, and his daughter, Galina. He stayed there for no more than the time it took a woman, who popped up just as mysteriously at the other side of the deceased, to snap a picture, whereupon the two of them disappeared.

The picture may be seen facing page 183 in *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov*, the musical-literary sensation of the early 1980s, which has now been made into a movie by the British director Tony Palmer, with Ben Kingsley in the starring role. Solomon Volkov was the bearded stranger. He was a member of the editorial staff of *Sovetskaya muzyka*, the official organ of the Union of Soviet Composers. He had already begun to make a local reputation as a music journalist with a book on the young composers of Leningrad, his native city. Later that year, together with his wife Marianna, a professional photographer, he joined the great wave of Soviet Jewish emigration that followed in the wake of détente.

The Volkovs arrived in New York in July 1976. Solomon applied for a research fellowship at Columbia University, with a biography of Shostakovich as his stated project. As a member of the university's music department specializing in Russian music, I was asked to interview him and write a letter of recommendation. At the interview in his hotel room, Volkov disclosed to me that he had enjoyed a close, clandestine relationship with Shostakovich, and had elicited extensive memoirs from him during the last years of the composer's life. He was now awaiting their piecemeal arrival from various way stations in Europe, whither they had been smuggled by willing travelers. Their publication, he hinted, would fundamentally revise our image of Shostakovich, and also of a whole era in the history of Russian music, indeed of Russia itself. He showed me interviews on the subject he had given Italian reporters; and, although this was no proof of the memoirs' existence, I was eager to give him the benefit of the doubt. I wrote an enthusiastic letter. He received his sinecure. Thus I became an early accomplice in what was, I later realized, a shameful exploitation.

When Volkov's book was finally published in 1979 by Harper & Row, it certainly lived up to the frenzy of advanced publicity. Its Shostakovich was an embittered ironist, who had never been complicit, to the slightest degree, with the Soviet regime; who had, on the contrary, seen through it, mocked it, protested it all along; whose "Aesopean" manner of expression and outward submission put him in the hallowed tradition of the 19th-century radical writers who knew how to outsmart the tsarist censorship, and beyond them, in the tradition of the *yurodiviye*—the Holy Fools—who threatened the tsars of Muscovy with God's truth.

Thus the exultant finale of the Fifth Symphony (composed in 1937, a memorable year) was obviously "forced rejoicing, created under threat, as in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*." The Eleventh Symphony was not a celebration of the 1905 revolution; it was a protest, rather, against the suppression of the Hungarian revolt of 1956. The Seventh Symphony, revered (and just as often jeered) the world over for its portrayal of the Nazi advance on Leningrad, was actually "planned before the war," and the "invasion theme" had nothing to do with fascists: "I was thinking of other enemies of humanity when I composed the theme." The diabolical whirlwind of a scherzo in the Tenth Symphony was a portrait of Stalin. The Twelfth was to have contained a comparable portrait of Lenin.

This was inspiring stuff. Everyone wanted to believe it. Therefore, according to ecstatic reviewers, it was all true. The book was translated into a dozen languages. It won prizes. It became the subject of symposia. The reception of *Testimony* was the greatest critical scandal I have ever witnessed.

For, as any proper scholar could plainly see, the book was a fraud. Yet even those who could did not want to see. Most, including the author of the standard English-language history of Soviet music, confidently endorsed Volkov's "ring of authenticity." (Most original of all was the reasoning of an American conductor long identified with modern Russian music: "Proof of Volkov's veracity . . . surely lies in the very absence of endorsements by Rostropovich, Kondrashin, and other defectors in a position to confirm or deny episodes described in the book, but who may still fear reprisals." Kondrashin later came through with an endorsement; Rostropovich has expressed reservations.) Meanwhile, though, the voice of an unassuming scholarly *yurodiviya* was heard by very few.

Her name was Laurel Fay. She meticulously tested the book's claims. Her essay, "Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose Testimony?" was published in the *Russian Review*, a specialist journal of small circulation, normally devoted to Soviet politics, in vol. XXXIX, 1980, pages 484-93. I give the reference so that the interested may find it; for her disclosures have failed somehow to reach the general reader, and even the musical specialist. The innocent continue to rely on Volkov's book as a source of attractively scurrilous information. Its portrait of Shostakovich has entered the public imagination. But Fay has absolutely demolished its credibility.

I will confine myself here to Fay's most damaging finding, for it is itself conclusive. *Testimony* is not based on an autograph manuscript, or any other original written document. It purports, of course, to be oral history, a product of interviews. Yet not even a tape exists. The only evidence Volkov offered for the authenticity of the work is the claim that Shostakovich signed the first page of each of the eight chapters of edited typescript with the inscription "I have read [this]." Fay shows that in at least seven out of eight instances, the signed page did not contain memoir material at all. It contained only an updated (and uncredited) transcript of a text previously published in the U.S.S.R. That is all we know

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Shostakovich to have read and approved. What is such material doing in a book of orally elicited memoirs? More, the only passages in which Fay was able to identify recycled material were precisely those places Shostakovich was asked to sign. None of the sensational "new" material in the book comes with even this much "testimony" as to its authenticity. "The inevitable nagging questions," as Fay framed them, are these: "Is the manuscript which Shostakovich signed identical to the manuscript which has been translated and published as Shostakovich's *Testimony*? Is it possible that Volkov misrepresented the nature and the contents of the book to Shostakovich just as he may be misrepresenting them to the reader?"

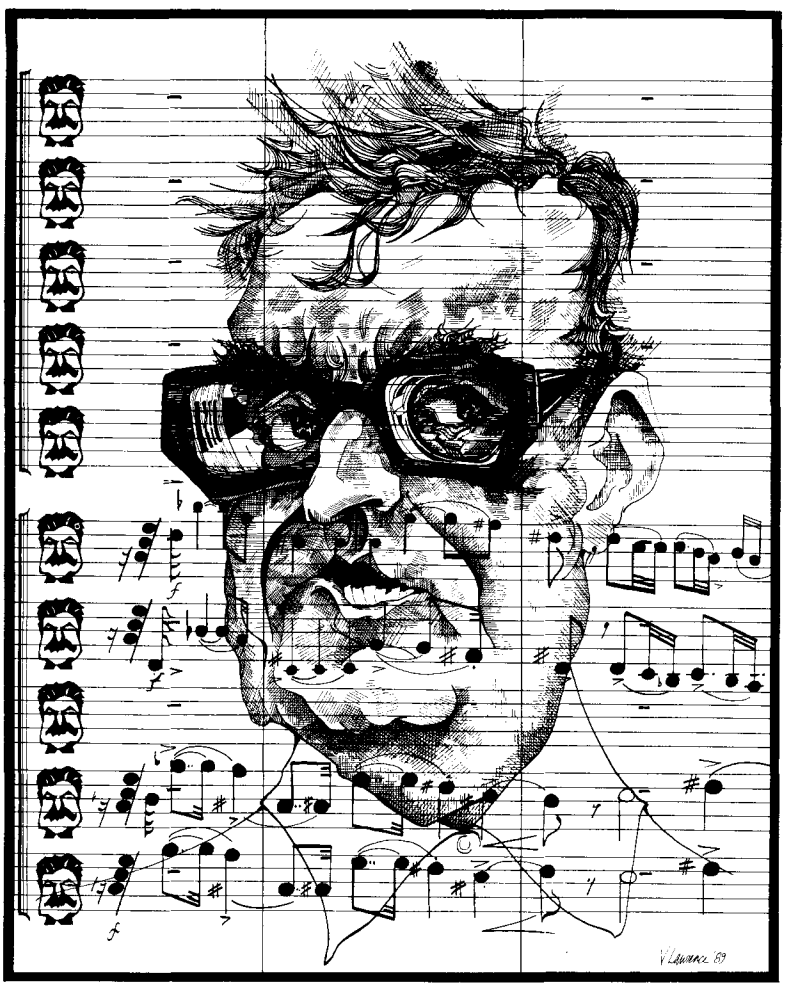
That the book contains some genuine interview material is not in doubt. The frontispiece shows a group photograph including Volkov and Shostakovich, inscribed by the composer to his interlocutor "as a souvenir of our conversation about Glazunov, Zoshchenko, Meyerhold." The parts of the book concerning these figures—and especially the endearing portrait of Alexander Glazunov, Shostakovich's teacher at the Leningrad Conservatory and practically the book's only hero—can probably be accepted as authentic. But these are not the parts that set everyone agog. And the matter does not end there. As Fay pointed out, even if the authenticity of *Testimony* could be vindicated, the equally troublesome question of its veracity would remain. A great deal of evidence suggests that in his later years Shostakovich became desperately obsessed with his historical image, and with the theme of self-justification. For he *did* have a history of collaboration to live down.

Now we have Tony Palmer's appalling film of *Testimony*, which further debases Volkov's exploitation of the composer and his afflicted life. At one point Volkov has his Shostakovich remark, "I despise sentimentality, can't bear it, and I'm not reminiscing so that sensitive ladies can bring their scented hankies to their eyes." You can get out your handkerchiefs now, dear ladies. For maudlin sanctimony, Palmer's film is unsurpassed.

His Shostakovich leads tours of Babi Yar, discusses Stalin's perfidy with Marshal Tukhachevsky, lovingly explains the "real" meaning of the Seventh Symphony to his adorable daughter. There is the obligatory scene in which Stalin's mother berates her son ("You should have been a priest"), and the one in which a bunch of indignant composers are seen walking out on a ranting Comrade Zhdanov. Most odious of all is the composer's deathbed duet with the shade of his old nemesis. "I made a great composer out of you," Stalin gloats. Coached in smart-alecky irony from the movie's start, we take the meaning: were it not for the suffering that Stalin foisted upon him, Shostakovich would never have reached his heights or his depths. It is the old fable of starvation in the garret, of art flourishing in adversity, updated for totalitarianism, and so heartless and patronizing that it is a wonder that even Volkov (who is credited as a consultant to the film) did not protest.

The only antidote to these platitudes and these distortions is to reveal what they conceal. Consider what the book and the film portray as the turning point in Shostakovich's career: his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. It is not often performed, and it is currently unavailable on disc (except in a hard-to-find Soviet import of its revised version on Melodiya records), but it is one of the most famous operas of the 20th century. Everyone knows it as the opera that Stalin personally repressed. That, according to Volkov and Palmer, is reason enough to love it.

A careful hearing of the opera, however, leaves things less simple, aesthetically and morally. One cannot come to terms with this work without bewilderment and pain. Confronting *Lady Macbeth* requires a long and hard look at some of the ghastliest aspects of life in our ghastly century; and in the end one is not consoled by what one has learned.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

We must begin with some literary background. For a 19th-century author, one way to expose social ills was to place a sweet innocent amid injustice and corruption: to condemn the environment by contrast. Though it was usually accomplished by transparent contrivance, this technique fueled the whole movement known as "realism." The classic example of the maneuver in Russian literature was Alexander Ostrovsky's drama *The Storm*, first performed in 1859 and published the next year in the pages of *Moskvityanin* (The Muscovite), one of those legendary "thick journals" at the crossroads of literature, philosophy, and politics, around which the 19th-century Russian intelligentsia led its busy life of the mind. (Several operas have been based on it, including Janáček's *Kat'a Kabanová*.)

Ostrovsky's heroine, Katerina Kabanova, is the wife of a merchant in an unnamed Volga town, a sensitive, poetic nature, stifled by the prison-like atmosphere of her husband's family, which is epitomized by her formidable mother-in-law. She becomes infatuated with another man, succumbs to her passion during her husband's absence on a business trip, is forced by conscience to confess, and is driven by her shame to suicide.

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Her plight is shown most forcefully in the scene of her husband's departure, when she insists on swearing a hysterical oath of fidelity that the reader knows she will be unable to keep. After this harrowing scene, one can only sympathize with Ostrovsky's adulteress, however one feels about her crime.

And if, like every educated Russian since 1860, one has read Nikolai Dobrolyubov's famous critique of Ostrovsky's play, one cannot think of Katerina without recalling the essay's title: "A Ray of Light in the Dark Kingdom." The precocious Dobrolyubov (1836-61), deified in the Soviet Union as a proto-revolutionary "radical democrat," interpreted the plays of Ostrovsky as a sustained yet futile indictment of patriarchal merchant-class mores. He hailed *The Storm* for embodying, in Katerina's suicide, at least a gesture of protest against the "dark kingdom's" backward, oppressive structure, and a prophesy of its fall. For him, and for Soviet readers and writers, Katerina Kabanova was an early martyr of the revolution.

Of a wholly different order from "realistic" plays and novels, which embodied (or were seen to embody) themes of social protest, was another favorite 19th-century genre, the horror story. At the beginning of the century, horror stories generally concerned the supernatural. By century's end, their subject matter had shifted to the opposite extreme: to "naturalism," to lurid yet minutely dispassionate descriptions of aberrant human behavior, of crime and brutality viewed as if under a pathologist's microscope. It was part of the naturalist's technique to appear to take no sides; but in fact the tale of horror tended tacitly to condemn those who upset the established order, natural (*Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*) or social (the novels of Zola). This genre had nothing to do with protest.

An early Russian classic of naturalism was Nikolai Leskov's famous "sketch" of ungovernable passion and mayhem, first published in 1865 in *Epokha*, Dostoyevsky's own thick journal, under the title "The Lady Macbeth of Our District." When it appeared as a book, the district was specified; it was Mtsensk, in south-central Russia, about as close to the middle of nowhere as one could get in a country that had more "nowhere" than any other. The plot shares a number of striking features with Ostrovsky's *Storm*. The title character is also a childless merchant wife named Katerina, whose life is made miserable by a despotic in-law, and who is left behind when her husband takes a business trip. In the grip of boredom and frustration, she, too, takes a lover.

But Katerina Izmailova does not confess. She is, instead, found out by her carping father-in-law. To avoid punishment, she murders him. Her husband returns. To avoid having to give up her lover, she murders again, this time with "an evil joy." She marries her lover, Sergei (a clerk at the Izmailov mill), conceives his child, and inherits the family business. But another heir to the Izmailov fortune unexpectedly surfaces in the person of her late husband's nephew, a saintly little child. To avoid losing her inheritance, she murders for the third time, "as though demons had broken loose from their chains." She and Sergei are apprehended *in flagrante* by a crowd of villagers returning from church (not the subtlest way of contriving a collision with the moral order, but hair-raising in its execution). They are sentenced to hard labor. By now, "light and darkness, good and evil, joy and boredom did not exist" for Katerina. On the way to Siberia, Sergei takes up with another woman. In a paroxysm of despair at losing him, Katerina murders yet again: she grabs her rival and with her jumps into the icy Volga, thus finally murdering herself.

Leskov's story began, "In our part of the world one sometimes comes across people of such character that one cannot recall them without a shudder even when many years have elapsed since the last encounter." One could hardly claim that Leskov portrayed the monstrous protagonist of his tight-lipped little shocker with "sympathy," or sought to inspire anything of the kind in his reader. Yet that is just what Dmitri Shostakovich tried to do when, 65 years and an October Revolution later, he turned Leskov's sketch into his second (and, as things turned out, his last) opera.

In an essay published in the program for *Lady Macbeth*'s first production, which opened at the Leningrad Maly Theater on January 22, 1934, the 27-year-old Shostakovich made three startling assertions. First, that "there is no work of Russian literature that more vividly or expressively characterizes the position of women in the old prerevolutionary time" than Leskov's. But "Leskov, as a brilliant representative of prerevolutionary literature, could not correctly interpret the events that unfold in his story." Thus Shostakovich's own task was clear: "... in every way to justify Katerina so that she would impress the audience as a positive character."

All this was in stark contrast to Leskov, who cast his story in dispassionate terms, parodying the manner of what in Russia is known as a "procurator," an impartial court officer whose job it is to prepare summaries of evidence for criminal cases. Shostakovich passionately embraced the role of counsel for the defense. His strategy was to exonerate his heroine by indicting her surroundings, to turn her from sinner to martyr. Here is how he made his case to the public, addressing them exactly as an attorney might address a jury:

> Katerina is an intelligent, talented and interesting woman. Owing to the nightmarish circumstances in which life has placed her, owing to the cruel, greedy, petty merchant environment that surrounds her, her life has become sad, dull, gloomy. She does not love her husband, she has no joys, no consolations, And all at once there appears the foreman, Sergei ...

Intelligent, talented, interesting: this is not Leskov's Katerina. But Ostrovsky would have known her; and as we read Shostakovich's essay, and observe the events of her life as he portrayed them, it gradually dawns that he has switched heroines on us. He has undertaken to turn Leskov's naturalistic horror tale into a high-minded realist tract. "It would be fairest of all," the composer wrote of his heroine, "to say that her crimes are a protest against the tenor of the life she is forced to live, against the dark and suffocating atmosphere of the merchant class in the last century." This goes beyond Ostrovsky, all the way to Dobrolyubov. And sure enough, Shostakovich does not fail to call his Katerina "a ray of light in the dark kingdom."

In the opera itself, the Ostrovsky/Dobrolyubov subtext is again brought right to the surface, when the husband's departure episode from *The Storm* is transplanted into Leskov's plot at the end of the first scene. As Shostakovich (and his co-librettist Alexander Preis) recast it, the scene is much less subtle than in Ostrovsky. Now it is the evil in-law, not the heroine herself, who insists on the oath. And since it comes before the love intrigue unfolds, it carries no foreboding. Instead of revealing the heroine's fatal ambivalence, it merely intensifies what is already a heavy-handed portrayal of her oppression. Like everything else in the opera, it whitens Katerina by darkening the background. But how white, finally, can she get? How dark must a kingdom be to turn a multiple murderess into a ray of light? How far can moral values be relativized?

And how did Shostakovich hope to bring it off? First, he eliminated whatever could not be "rehabilitated" in Leskov's portrayal of his heroine's behavior. This meant, above all, getting rid of the third of the original Katerina's murders; for as Shostakovich rather exquisitely put it, "The murder of a child, no matter how it

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may be explained, always makes a bad impression." What remained was freely altered to reserve the moral high ground for the heroine. Instead of being discovered by a group of religious villagers (with an upstanding engineer from St. Petersburg at their head), the operatic Katerina's crimes are detected by a "reedy lout" who stumbles upon the corpse of Katerina's husband when he breaks into the Izmailov storeroom to steal some vodka. He eagerly runs off to the local constabulary with the news, singing what Shostakovich, in conversation with the now-exiled Soviet soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, characterized in later (post-Stalinist) years as "a hymn to all informers."

In the next scene, the police are portrayed as a venal, degenerate lot who spend their days persecuting "nihilists" instead of protecting the rights of citizens, and who are overjoyed to have a pretext to avenge themselves on Katerina Izmailova for not having invited them to her wedding. In an especially odious invention, Shostakovich precedes the father-in-law's discovery of Katerina's adultery with a lecherous soliloquy in which the detestable old man declares his intention of seducing her himself. The only other figure of potential moral authority in the opera, the priest who is summoned to minister to the poisoned father-in-law, is portrayed even more cartoonishly than the police.

Merely to recite these unsubtle devices is to expose them. In cold summary, they cannot make the case for Katerina as victim. Shostakovich knew this very well: "It would be fruitless to argue at length the ways I justify all these crimes, since the real justification is to be found in the musical material; for I consider that in an opera it is the music that plays the main, the leading, the decisive role." Of course it does, but only when the composer is equal to the task. Few composers have been as well equipped for it as Shostakovich. In his second opera he proves himself a genius of the genre, fully able to create a world in tone that carries complete conviction. And he used his awesome powers to perpetrate a colossal moral inversion. In one of the most pernicious uses to which music has ever been put, he gave the lie to formalists who would deny music the ethical and expressive powers of which the ancients speak. In the hands of a genius the art of music is still the potent, dangerous thing about which Plato warned.

The composer maintains control over the emotional projection and reception of his opera's gruesome subject matter in two ways. First, there are the overt editorials, in the form of five interludes connect-

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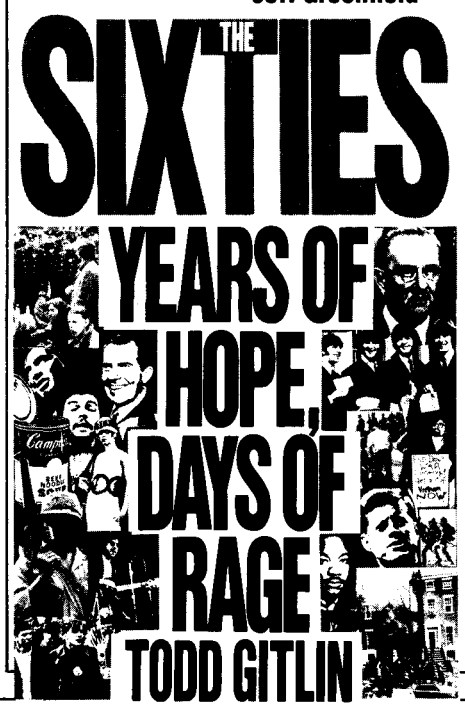
Jeff Greenfield



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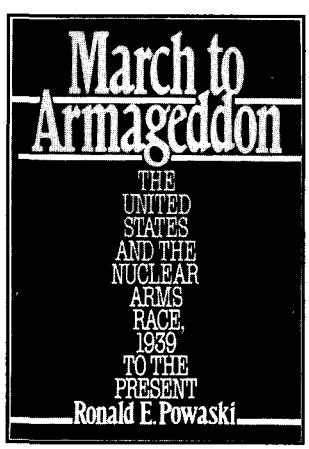

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ing all scenes not bounded by intermissions. This kind of unmediated authorial intervention was obviously something Shostakovich had learned from the third act of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (which was performed in Leningrad in 1927, long before its migration westward).

What is overt is easily resisted. More insidious is Shostakovich's other method. Evoking a wealth of familiar musical genres, in a bewilderingly eclectic range of styles, the composer makes sure that one character, and one character only, is perceived by his audience as a human being. From the very first page of the score, Katerina's music is rhapsodic, soaring, and (most telling) endowed with the lyric intonations of Russian folk song. As the curtain rises to reveal Katerina alone, lamenting her fate, the clarinet plays a cadential phrase that had been characterized as "the soul of Russian music" by Glinka, the first great Russian composer, a century earlier. Katerina's is the only music in the opera that has emotional "life," as it was traditionally portrayed by composers in the heyday of romantic opera. Like the emotions themselves, it waxes and wanes; it has rhythmic and dynamic flexibility; it reaches climaxes.

Every other member of the cast is portrayed as subhuman. The police, the priest, the "seedy lout," the other minor characters are all presented as repulsive caricatures, their music reeking of operetta, of the music hall, of military bands and circus parades. The orchestral ritornello that precedes each stanza of the "police station waltz" is the most conspicuous reversion to the brash "wrong-note" vein so familiar from Shostakovich's earlier music, like the notorious polka from the *Age of Gold* ballet, where it had caricatured top-hatted capitalists. The priest, officiating over the last rites for Katerina's first victim, is too dim-witted even for the wrong notes: he lapses into a polka of his own, all the more absurd because all its notes are "right." When Katerina's father-in-law—usually painted in the darkest orchestral hues and the ugliest, most distorted harmonies—muses lecherously right before discovering her adultery, it is to the incongruous strains of a Viennese waltz. The seedy lout's solo scene has to be the most brazen piece of bordello trash ever authored by a "serious" composer.

Most effective of all, though, is Shostakovich's way of accompanying the singing, and above all, the movements of [redacted] figures except Katerina with trudging or galloping ostinati—inflexibly rigorous rhythmic pulsations that characterize them one and all as soulless, insensate automatons, comic-book creatures, incapable of either experiencing or inspiring an emotional response of any kind. This applies even to the chorus, the "people" who are represented in this opera as a cynical, apathetic, and (in the last scene) downright heartless mob. It is sheer dehumanization.

This technique operates at its most insidious in the scene that portrays the murder of Zinovy Borisovich, Katerina's husband. His murder is "justified" strictly by the "musical material." The scene

Homer In The Underground

I

In scorched summer light, from the circle of Charing Cross,
he arose with the Underground's grit and its embers of sparrows
in a bargeman's black greatcoat, clutching in one scrofulous

claw his brown paper manuscript. The nose, like a pharos,
bulbed from his cragged face, and the beard under it was
foam that exploded into the spray burst of eyebrows.

On the verge of collapse, the fallen sails of his trousers
were upheld by a rope. In the barges of different shoes
he flapped towards The National. The winch of his voice,

a fog still in its throat, barged through the queues
at the newspaper kiosks, then changed gears with the noise
of red double-deckers embarking on chartered views

from pigeon-stirred Trafalgar; it broke off the icing
from wedding-cake London. Gryphons on their ridge
of sandstone snarled because it had carried the cries in

The Isle of Dogs running over Westminster Bridge.
Today it would anchor in the stone waves of the entrance
of St. Martin-In-The-Fields. There, in tiered sunshine,

the black sail collapsed, face sunward with both hands
crossed over the shop-paper volume bound with grey twine.
He looked like a heap of slag-coal crusting the tiers

with their summering tourists. Eyes shut, the frayed lips
chewed the breeze, the beard curled like the dog's ears
of his turned-down Odyssey, but Omeros was naming the ships

whose oars spidered soundlessly over the sun-webbed calm
behind his own lashes. Then, suddenly, a raging sparrow
of a church-warden bobbed down the steps. It plucked one arm.

The bargeman huddled. It screeched. It yanked an elbow,
then kicked him with polished pumps, and a curse as
Greek to the choleric cleric as one might imagine,

sprayed the spluttering soutane. It showed him the verses
framed at the entrance announcing this Sunday's lesson
in charity, etc. Then, like a dromedary, over the sands

of the scorching pavement, the hump began to press on
back to the river. The sparrow, rubbing both hands,
nodded, and chirruped up the steps back to its sanctuary,

where, dipping one claw in the font, it vanished inside
the webbed stone. The bargeman tacked towards the estuary
and font of his peace. It was summer. London rustled with pride.

II

He curled up on a bench underneath the Embankment wall.
He saw London gliding with the Thames around its neck
like a barge which an old brown horse draws up a canal

if its yoke is Time. From here he could see the dreck
under the scrolled skirts of statues, the grit in stone lions'
eyes; he saw under everything an underlying grime

that itched in the balls of rearing bronze stallions,
how the stare of somnolent sphinxes narrowed in time
to the swaying bells 'of cities all the floure'

petalling the spear-railed park where a couple suns
near the angled shade of All-Hallows-By-The-Tower,
as the tinkling Thames drags by in its ankle-irons,

while the ginko's leaves flexed their fingers overhead.
He mutters its fluent alphabet, the peaked A of a spire,
the half-vowels of bridges, down to the crumpled Z

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begins with Katerina and Sergei blissfully in bed, surrounded by the lushest, most lyrical orchestral music in the entire opera. Three times this mood is broken: first by Sergei himself (whose music gets more and more operetta-like as the opera approaches its denouement); next by an apparition of the first victim; and then by the offstage approach of Zinovy, signaled by the use of a typically "trudging" ostinato. Once he arrives on stage, the trudge gives way, literally, to a gallop—that is, to that maddest of all 19th-century ballroom dances, the "galop," of which Shostakovich was the pre-eminent 20th-century master. The whole scene of confrontation and murder is played against an unremitting oompah.

Elliott Carter saw *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* in Germany in 1960 and found this scene utterly baffling. "The relation of the music to the action is unaccountable," he thought, unable to comprehend the reason why Shostakovich would have "the heroine and her lover strangle her husband on a large stage-sized four-poster bed to a lively dance tune." But the reason is clear enough: the dance tune is there to dehumanize the husband, and to diminish the heroine's crime to a matter of cruelty to animals at worst. What condemns him is nothing more than the fact of his being a part of Katerina's hated environment: he is the beneficiary of the social system that oppressed his wife, and that suffices to justify his "liquidation." And all of this is conveyed to us by the music alone.

Now we know why Shostakovich's opera was hailed by its earliest critics as such a praiseworthy advance over its literary source. Shostakovich had turned the tale into one of class warfare. Katerina's victims were class enemies, creatures at a lower stage of historical development, and she had every right, according to the laws of historical materialism, to eliminate them. Shostakovich, wrote Adrian Piotrovsky, the Maly Theater dramaturge, in the program book to the premier production, "has created the seemingly paradoxical figure of the innocent murderess, a criminal of romantic purity. This he does, not in a spirit of humanitarian forgiveness, but rather by means of a wide-ranging, acute analysis of the social reality that surrounds his Katerina." (Piotrovsky would later collaborate with Shostakovich on the ill-fated ballet *The Limpid Stream*, and shortly afterward perish in one of the early Stalin purges.)

It was this kind of "analysis" that was being advanced, even as Shostakovich was writing his opera, in defense of the lawless extermination of the kulaks. This was a time of hideous moral inversion in all walks of Soviet life, when the high tide of Stalinism was coming in and the basest atrocities were being justified in the name of the loftiest humanitarian ideals. In the year that *Lady Macbeth* was completed, little Pavlik Morozov, a well-indoctrinated "pioneer" from a farm near Sverdlovsk, denounced his parents to the secret police as "enemies of the people" and became a Soviet saint (not to be decanonized until the days of Gorbachev). Shostakovich's Katerina was the

of an overcoat draping a bench in midsummer's fire.
He read the inverted names of boats in their element,
he saw the tugs chirring up a devalued Empire

as the coins of their wake passed the Houses of Parliament.
But the shadows keep multiplying from the Outer
Provinces, their dialects light as the ginko's leaf, their

fingers plucking their saris as wind picks at water,
and the statues raising objections, he sees a wide river
with its landing of pier-stakes flooding Westminster's

flagstones, and traces the waves from dugouts in the frieze
of a Bank's running cornice, and whenever the ginko stirs
the wash of far navies settles in the bargeman's eyes.

A statesman swims upside down, one hand up in response
to a question raised in The House, and applause rises
from the lapping Thames, from the benches in the leaves.

And the sunflower sets after all, retracting its irises
with the bargeman's own, then buds on black, iron trees
as a glaucous fog hides the empires, London, Rome, Greece.

III

Who decrees a great epoch? The meridian of Greenwich.
Who doles out our zeal, and in which way lies our
hope? In the cobbles of sinister Shoreditch,

in the widening rings of Big Ben's iron flower,
in the barges chained like our islands to the Thames.
Where is the alchemical corn and the light it yields?

Where, in which stones of the Abbey, are incised our names?
Who defines our delight? St. Martin-In-The-Fields.
After every Michaelmas, its piercing soprano steeple

defines our delight. Within whose palatable vault
will echo the Saints' litany of our island people?
Saint Paul's salt dome, when we are worth their salt.

Stand by the tilted crosses of well-quiet Glen-da-Loch.
Follow the rook's crook'd finger to the ivied grange.
As black as the rook is, it comes from a higher stock.

Who screams out our price? The crows of the Corn Exchange.
Where are the pleasant pastures? A green baize-table.
Who invests in our happiness? The Chartered Tour.

Who will teach us a history of which we too are capable?
The red double-decker's view of The Bloody Tower.
When are our brood, like the sparrows, a public nuisance?

When they screech at the sinuous swans on the Serpentine.
The swans are royalled protected, but in whose hands
are the black crusts of our children? In the pointed sign

under the harps of the willows, to the litter of Margate Sands.
What has all this to do with the price of fish, our salary
tidally scanned with the bank-rate by waxworks tellers?

Where is the light of the world? In the National Gallery.
In Palladian Wren. In the City that can buy and sell us
the packets of tea stirred with our crystals of sweat.

Where is our sub-lunar peace? In that sickle sovereign
peeling the gilt from St. Paul's onion silhouette.
There is our lunar peace in the glittering grain

of the coined estuary, our moonlit, immortal wheat,
its white sail cresting the gradual swell of the Downs,
startling the hare from the pillars on Salisbury Plain

sharpening the grimaces of thin-lipped market towns,
whitewashing the walls of Brixton, darkening the grain
when coal-shadows cross it. Dark future and darker street.

DEREK WALCOTT

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same sort of heroine. His opera is the faithful reflection of an abominable time.

In one way only was Shostakovich faithful to Leskov: in his shockingly naturalistic portrayal of Katerina's sexual passion. It is lust, pure and simple, that he portrays; ignited by rape, it turns Katerina into a love-slave, giving the lie to the claim that she is a liberated, aggressive woman in an age of feminine passivity, that her audacity is another justification for her crimes. In fact, the carnal theme is exaggerated in the opera beyond anything in Leskov. The rape music reaches its climax with an unmistakable *ejaculatio praecox*, followed by a leisurely detumescence. The salacious trombone glissandos that portray the behavior of Sergei's member achieved instant world fame when an American magazine dubbed them an exercise in "pornophony."

This aspect of the opera understandably scandalized a certain lapsed seminarian of the Georgian Orthodox Church, who took in a performance of the chief ornament of the Soviet musical stage during the third year of its triumphant run. Stalin's indignation furnished the immediate pretext for the infamous *Pravda* editorial of January 28, 1936, "Muddle Instead of Music," which remains one of the great paradigmatic documents of the buffeting of the arts by totalitarian states.

The article's first target was the opera's obscenity:

> The music croaks and hoots and snorts and pants in order to represent love scenes as naturally as possible. And "love" in its most vulgar form is daubed all over the opera. The merchant's double bed is the central point on the stage. On it all the "problems" are solved. . . . This glorification of merchant-class lasciviousness has been described by some critics as satire. But there can be no question of satire here. The author uses all the means at his disposal and his power of musical and dramatic expression to attract the sympathy of the spectators for the coarse and vulgar aims and actions of the merchant's wife, Katerina Izmailova. *Lady Macbeth* is popular among bourgeois audiences abroad. Is it not because the opera is so confused and so entirely free of political bias [!] that it is praised by bourgeois critics? Is it not perhaps because it titillates the depraved tastes of bourgeois audiences with its witching, clamorous, neurasthenic music?

Criticism next turned to the opera's style, the real "muddle instead of music." Its rhetoric notwithstanding, the editorial was the first conclusive indication that the arts policies of the Soviet state would be governed henceforth by the philistine petit-bourgeois taste of the only critic that mattered. In a phrase that must have scared the poor composer half out of his wits, the chief official organ of Soviet power accused him of "trifling with difficult matters," and hinted that "it might end very badly."

Thus was Dmitri Shostakovich, perhaps Soviet Russia's most loyal musical son, and certainly her most talented one, made a sacrificial lamb, precisely for his preeminence among Soviet artists of his generation. The real purpose of the *Pravda* editorial was to demonstrate how directly the arts were to be subject to Party controls in the wake of what the unsuspecting Shostakovich himself had hailed in the program book as "the historic April resolution." This was an action of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, taken on April 23, 1932, in accordance with which all existing Soviet arts associations were dissolved and replaced with "unions" of writers, artists, composers, etc. that were directly answerable to the Party bureaucracy. At first it was greeted by serious artists as a positive move, for it removed from contention the clamorous "proletarian" associations that during the 1920s had been aggressively challenging the high culture. In fact, the resolution removed all barriers that might have protected the arts from the exercise of Stalin's arbitrary rule. Shostakovich, through his opera, was one of the first victims of the new dispensation; and if, as things turned out, he was spared the ultimate Stalinist fate, he had to live for many years under the constant threat of "a bad end." That this unhappy man nevertheless continued to function as an artist and a citizen has lent his career a heroic luster.

It is inevitably in that heroic light, a light made garish by Volkov, Palmer, and others, that we now view *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. We know it as the work through which the Soviet Union's great composer was disgraced; the work whose suppression was an incalculable loss to us, since it spelled the end of what would have been one of the great operatic careers; the work that had to endure a 27-year ban before it was cautiously let back on stage, retitled *Katerina Izmailova*, in a bowdlerized version sans pornophony with an expanded final scene of convicts en route to exile that is fraught with an excruciating subtext relating to the composer's well-known tribulations.

So ineluctably has the opera come to symbolize pertinacity in the face of despotism that it is almost impossible to see it clearly now as an embodiment of that very despotism. The fate of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* opened Shostakovich's eyes to the nature of the regime under which he was condemned to live. It could be argued that the work's martyrdom humanized its creator. And yet the opera remains a profoundly inhumane work of art. Its chilling treatment of the victims amounts to a justification of genocide.

In the liberal West, as we have been proudly reminded in recent weeks, we do not believe in banning works of art. If it is because we believe that they cannot threaten life and morals, then we are more vulnerable than we imagine to the dehumanizing message of this great opera. If it is because we believe that ethics has no bearing on aesthetics, then the process of dehumanization has already begun. If, for its inspired music and its dramatic power, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* is to hold the stage today, it should be seen and heard with an awareness of history, with open eyes and ears, and with hearts on guard.

Huck In The Bronx

BY ALFRED KAZIN

Billy Bathgate
by E. L. Doctorow

(Random House, 320 pp., $19.95)

The Bronx-born gangster Arthur Flegenheimer, professionally "Dutch Schultz," not one of your nice Jewish boys, was killed on October 23, 1935, mown down in a New Jersey chophouse with his immediate entourage. This consisted of his accountant, a mathematical wizard known as "Abbadabba" Berman, and his bodyguard, "Lulu" Rosencrantz. Doctorow has added, invented, a taciturn, horribly perfect man-of-all-work, "Irving," who never killed anyone, but did many a preliminary job that enabled Dutch and company to kill and kill.

The "Dutchman" was big in policy (the numbers racket), beer (which he compelled saloons to buy even after Prohibition), and unions (the window washers and waiters). He had committed quite a few murders himself with spectac-

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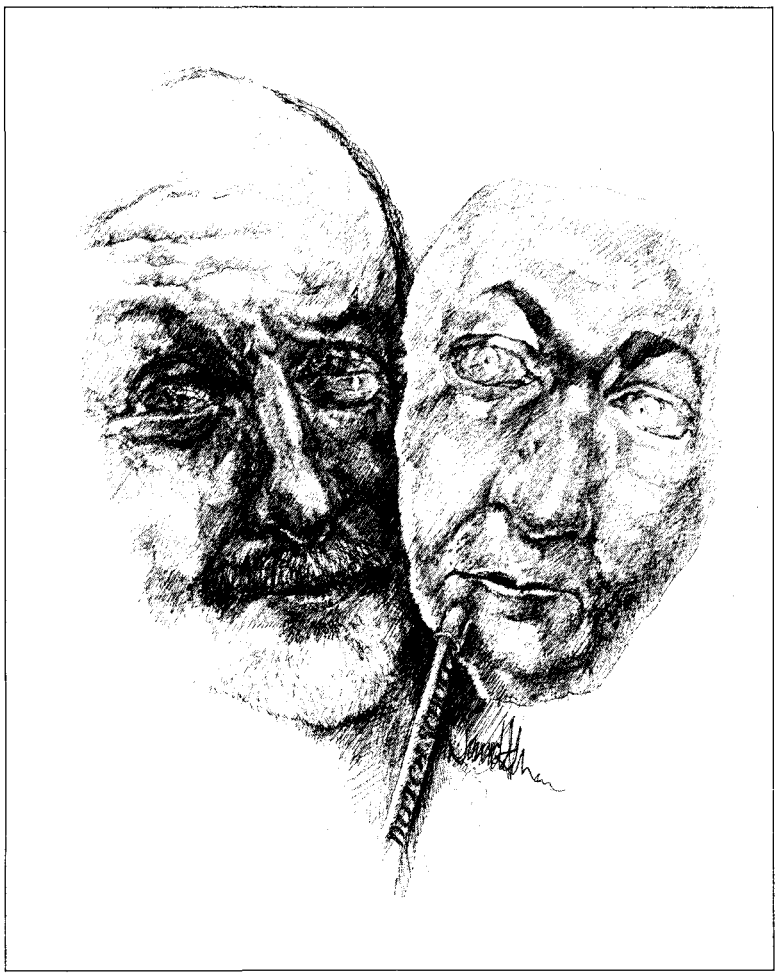
ular brutality, and had ordered many more. Though there were rival gangs, like Lucky Luciano's Mafia mob, that loved him not, Schultz might have lived beyond his 33rd year had he not, with his usual crazy rashness, plotted to have Thomas E. Dewey himself murdered. As Manhattan district attorney, Dewey was c- ding the wide swath through New York gangsterdom that was to make him governor of New York and twice a candidate for president of the United States.

In his deliciously irreverent and quite wonderful novel about the life and death of Schultz, E. L. Doctorow has him murdered by Lucky Luciano's gunmen. In the novel, Luciano stands witness to Schultz when the latter has himself very cunningly converted to the Roman Catholic faith in order to impress the small upstate town where he is to stand trial for income tax evasion. Luciano is, in the novel, understandably alarmed by the thought of having Dewey murdered.

Dutch did not die all at once. Strange to relate, he lingered long enough for an amazing monologue to be taken down. This became famous in its own right and has often been featured as a literary curiosity; it is so unlike what you would expect of gangster Schultz at his end. William Burroughs wrote a play, *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz*. Young professors of English, understandably looking for novelty, have found in Dutch's ravings a stream of consciousness "worthy of Joyce." "Please, mother! You pick me up now. Please, you know me." "I want to pay, let them leave me alone." Doctorow has kept some of the "last words," has invented others in the style of "A boy has never wept, nor dashed a thousand kim."

Doctorow has cleverly adapted and recast Schultz's last words to the services of his plot and somehow finds the thread of the ingeniously versatile style of his novel in these words. *Billy Bathgate* relates in *his* own words the adventures inside the Schultz gang of a 15-year-old boy who takes his last name from the once flourishing market street Bathgate Avenue in the Bronx. His Jewish father has skipped, his Irish mother is demented. He finds a kind of father in "Abbadabba" Berman, who reduces all existence to numbers, thus allowing Billy to dream that numbers can be changed to words. And Billy is understandably spellbound by the sheer hulking presence of Dutch Schultz himself, who in bulk exercises the kind of power over others that Billy comes to think of as another element of existence.

The book opens on a stunning scene in which Schultz's deputy "Bo" Weinberg, who has been disloyal to Schultz



DRAWING BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

in the secret company of Luciano, is prepared for death by the inestimable Irving. (As Luciano says after Irving's death, "A man like Irving, you don't find his quality.") Irving is encasing Bo's feet in a laundry tub of cement, and tying him up to a chair every which way before Dutch pushes the helpless fellow into the dark night river. Bo, who has performed many a murder for Schultz, is insulting Schultz with every conceivable obscenity so that Dutch will shoot him and end his agony. But the usually rabid Schultz is quiet and restrained, for once. "You always had the words, Bo. You got more words than me, being having been to high school."

The scene is all too vividly narrated by Billy who, duly registering every instant of the horror—and of Schultz's day to day career—will come through to us as the Bronx's own Huck Finn. Like Huck, he is encased in a violence not his own. Like Huck, he is so sentient, self-dependent, and in a sense self-"educated" that he brings a special style of his own to the book. This is quite lyrical at times and amusingly overdrawn in a style that rises at times to Joyce and descends to the darling vernacular of Damon Runyon. Billy is his own man in every sense, and so (this is one of Doctorow's jokes) he alone finds the clues in Dutch's last words that enable him to discover the millions that Dutch stashed away. With these Billy grows up to become an Ivy League graduate, U.S. Army officer in World War II, and a corporate entrepreneur.

The plot is a fairy tale of sorts, and there is a joke in the plot. With Doctorow's usual irony about the moneyed goings-on in the upper levels of American society, he has Billy conclude that the gangster world is not untypical of, at least, corporate America. But more immediately the joke is in Billy's narrative style. This is perfectly straight and chillingly vivid in giving us Dutch's looming presence and murderous rages, but becomes "inspired," gives itself a lift, which is the sheer joy of reporting a Bronx kid's ascent in life, when Billy is in communion with his own feelings:

> I had counted off my time with Mr. Shultz by the killings, the gun shots and sobs and cracking skulls resounded in my memory like tolling bells, but something else had been going on all that while, which was the movement of money, it had come in and it had gone out all that time, as uninterrupted as a tide in its incoming and outgoing, as steady and unceasing as the quiet celestial system of the churning earth.

The handsome and usually dashing Bo Weinberg had been taken to the river with his latest flame, a young society beauty married to a rich homosexual who gets kicks out of moving in gangster

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society. Bo's fate is to Billy "the first inkling of how a ritual death tampers with the universe." Billy marvels at "the realm of high audacity that these men moved in, like another dimension." Describing the 1935 street life of a working-class neighborhood in the Bronx, Billy writes, "I was very moved by the sullen idyll of all this impoverishment." But coming on the shockingly easy relations between Bo's girl and her husband, who is introduced to us on a couch holding his lover's erect penis in his hand, Billy surmises, "It made things go easier, living on an explanationless planet."

The book is full of Billy's understandably affected style, yet everything gets straight and deadly when he describes Schultz, in a "roar of rage" over the routine visit of a fire inspector to Schultz's nightclub, hammering the man to death on the floor. Schultz then cries, "Get this load of shit out of here," and the dutifully perfect Irving neatly doubles the body and crams it into a garbage can just as a carter—a private one, to pick up restaurant garbage—comes along on 56th Street.

As Huck is all country, Billy is all city. Each urban detail, right down to the hexagonal tiles on the park side of Fifth Avenue and the view from the El passing along Third, is wonderfully real to a boy whose gangster life gives him the whole city to take advantage of, and for all the risks, to be safe in. "The city has always given me assurances whenever I have asked for them."

Indeed it does. To the point where Billy, rounding out the fairy tale he has lived up from Bathgate Avenue, recovers Schultz's money. But—the Doctorow note—the money when recovered is clearly associated with junk and garbage. Though Dutch's gang is all gone, "Nothing was over, it was all still going on, the money was deathless, the money was eternal and the love of it infinite."

There are those who will bridle at the destined conclusion of the fable and the all too assured tone in which the grown and successful Billy identifies the slipperiness he has survived with the corporate America in which he now rules. Is it just Billy speaking here and not Doctorow? Bridle at the conclusion or not, it is all less serious in the end than what has come before. And if the conclusion is shocking, it is no less shocking because it is so amusing.

ALFRED KAZIN'S most recent book is *A Writer's America* (Knopf). *Our New York* (with photographs by David Finn) will be published by Harper & Row in September.

The Commons Touch

BY HENRY FAIRLIE

Harold Macmillan, Politician 1894-1956 by Alistair Horne

(Viking, 502 pp., $24.95)

This first volume of the authorized biography of Harold Macmillan ends with his summons to Buckingham Palace in January 1957, shortly after the fiasco at Suez; there he accepted the queen's commission to form a government following Anthony Eden's resignation. This came as a surprise to most political observers of the time, who assumed that the more obvious R. A. ("Rab") Butler would be preferred over Macmillan. Macmillan seemed too much a dilettante, too bookish, a fop, even an aesthete. But the decision lay with the now leaderless Cabinet, whose opinions were canvassed by Lord Salisbury, the elder statesman of the party, and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir. One by one they were shown in and asked by Salisbury, "Well, which is it, Wab or Hawold?" All but one, it is said, were in favor of Macmillan, who waited the next morning under the portrait of Gladstone in No. 11 Downing Street, the residence of the chancellor of the exchequer, and "read *Pride and Prejudice*—very soothing," until he was called to the palace at 2 o'clock.

That evening he emerged in Downing Street for the first time as prime minister (a story with which Alistair Horne will presumably open his second volume) to wave cheerily to the anxious crowd, and say audibly for the reporters: "I'm off to the Turf with the chief whip to celebrate." Edward Heath, the chief whip, a protégé of Macmillan, had done much to stimulate support for him among the Conservative backbenchers, and then report their feelings (objectively, of course) to Salisbury and Kilmuir. Perhaps nobody but Macmillan (and his model, Disraeli) would have risked the apparent frivolity of those first words at such a moment. He issued no grave call to reunite the nation or to restore its credit abroad. Having reached the top of the greasy pole, he proclaimed that he was off to an exclusive club in London where gaming for high stakes was appreciated, taking with him the chief whip who had smoothed his climb. Yet with that human remark he took a great deal of the tension out of a nation that felt humiliated and was rancorous in its disputes.

Six-and-a-half years later, when his long administration was crumbling around him, partly due to the sex-plus-security scandals surrounding John Profumo, Macmillan agreed to a succession of lengthy interviews with me: "conversations," he characteristically called them. No. 10 Downing Street was being renovated, and the prime minister's residence and offices had been moved half a block up Whitehall to the Admiralty. I would arrive about 5:30, and was held there (not unwillingly) as the dusk gathered outside on the late summer evenings, and scarcely noticed how dark the room had become. I always took my notebook; and always, after a few minutes, I tucked it under my chair. It would have been a crime to let it interrupt the free reflections of this dignified elderly man as his career was coming to an end in such tawdry circumstances.

I would let him talk (sometimes even ramble, although it would have been a mistake to think so), at times talking almost to himself. Usually I found something he had told me useful for the front page: in a late (handwritten) letter to me, after saying with characteristic grace, "I always enjoyed our conversations," there followed the expected dig, "and sometimes admired the next morning your ability to make bricks without straw." I was not looking for the scoop; but there were some memorable, quotable lines—the spit with which he said, for example, "I will not have Her Majesty's Government brought down by two tarts."

Few authorized biographies of a contemporary figure are more needed than the one that has been entrusted to Alistair Horne. During Macmillan's unusually lengthy term of six years and nine months (he doubled his majority at the general election of 1959), he was, with Eisenhower and then with Kennedy, with de Gaulle, and to a lesser extent with Adenauer, a dominant leader of the Western alliance, not least in its relations with the Soviet Union, with Khrushchev in particular. Though he was one of the most familiar and unmistakable of figures during these years, however, Macmillan remained (and still remains) an

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enigma to the British, and even more of a puzzle to Americans. It was typical that Kennedy, about to meet Macmillan in Bermuda, asked Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to explain Macmillan to him, so that he might be forewarned of his artfulness, and was handed an article in *Encounter*. On what other statesman of the time would a highbrow monthly have been a source of political intelligence?

And from his later meeting with Kennedy at Nassau, of course, Macmillan walked away, as Schlesinger says in *A Thousand Days*, with a triumph: with an American agreement to Britain's possession of its own nuclear deterrent, when the Americans had hoped to secure a multilateral force. Macmillan cultivated an air of nonchalance that was almost theatrical, but nobody could be more nimble and deadly, with ally as well as foe. He was vastly intelligent—the much younger Kennedy was somewhat in awe of him—but his seriousness was much harder to pin down. Insisting, in a conversation with me, on Britain's need for an independent deterrent, he used a characteristically wily argument: "We cannot be sure that there will always be a Jack Kennedy on whom we can rely. I'm old enough to remember Coolidge." That "Jack" was an unusual familiarity, and at the Cabinet table where we sat it sounded like condescension. He praised Kennedy, but slyly. "The Kennedys," he said to me on another occasion, "are a lot of small-town Borgias. Jack's the only one of the bunch with anything to him." Both sides of his hand were used for that slap.

Horne's first volume carries Macmillan only to the door of No. 10, but by then he had been in politics for almost 40 years; and it is in that preparation that we should at least start to seek some of the clues to the character of the mature politician. I was applauding his qualities and skills one morning, soon after he became prime minister, when Malcolm Muggeridge said, "I agree, my dear boy, but he's got power too late. They always get it too late." That is a haunting remark about all politicians in our democracies. (Only an aristocracy could have elevated Pitt to be prime minister at 24.) But it is exceptionally searching about Macmillan. As a young politician, he was innovative, daring, even farseeing; but one is left wondering how much of that was gone before he reached the top.

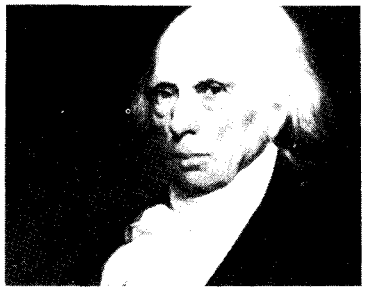
Horne's effort is quite adequate, especially for American readers who know little about Macmillan. One's criticisms are made, therefore, in a spirit of disappointment. Still, the letdown is real, and in the end inexcusable. Horne tells us that he started with doubts about his adequacy. He had never written a biography before. And his previous five books had been about France. What is more, apart from a work about the French army's role in politics, all his books were works about dramatic events that were strictly confined to a few years, or even months: the Algerian war, the fall of France in 1940, the battle of Verdun, the Siege of Paris and the Paris Commune. None of this seemed to equip him to write about a life that was so intricately woven into the fabric of British society and politics, about a political career of such extended and intense activity.

Horne is at his best when he can get away from Britain: to North Africa, for example, where Churchill sent Macmillan to be minister resident in 1942 to handle the Americans, and the even trickier French, before and during the Allied landings and the campaign in French North Africa. Horne captures the intrigues, the Gallic preening, the stubbornness of Darlan, Giraud, and (already) le Grand Charles *lui-même*. One of the British code names for de Gaulle was "Ramrod," of which Macmillan observed that it recalled "a man who was alleged to have the rigidity of a poker without its occasional warmth." Macmillan struggled against the vehement, sustained, and often devious opposition of the Americans, especially of Roosevelt; and it was largely due to the combined steadfastness, patience, and diplomacy of this man in his first exercise in the conduct of foreign policy that de Gaulle was at last (rightly) accepted by the Allies as the spokesman for the Free French, and later a liberated France.

In North Africa, then, and later with Macmillan in his role as "Viceroy of the Mediterranean" during the tortuous political scheming that followed the liberation of Italy, and finally in Greece during the civil war of 1944-45, where Macmillan could hardly stir without setting his hand in a barrel of asps, Horne has the same task as in his earlier books. And so he moves surely and steadily through the complexities of the factions, and delivers a wholly readable and comprehensible narrative that never breaks stride. But whenever Macmillan returns to Britain, where Horne cannot take such an overview of events, where the events are not as melodramatic, he is lost, and the reader misses precisely what he needs to know.

For, on the "smaller" scene, the tapestry grows not simpler, but richer. Every thread in the native environment of the subject needs to be followed, disentangled, and then woven back in. In this Horne fails. He has no feel, for example,

THE LAST OF THE FATHERS
James Madison and the Republican Legacy
Drew R. McCoy



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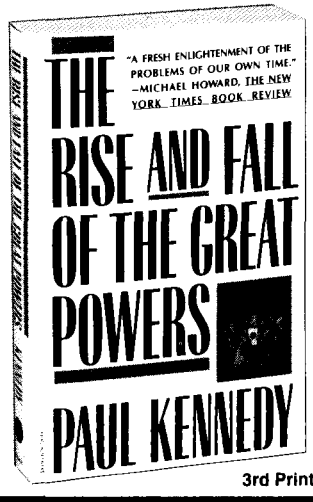
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for the House of Commons; it is hard to believe he has sat in the press gallery for many hours. Yet it is in the House that a British politician learns his trade, is tested more for his character than his abilities (hence the Conservative backbenchers' rejection of Rab), and must take his stand from day to day even as prime minister. The Commons, at least in those days, was the most arduous and remorselessly judging school of political character in the world. It was there that Macmillan made his mark, and began his slow, never flashy rise to power.

Macmillan entered Parliament first as the Conservative member for the deeply depressed northern industrial city of Stockton-on-Tees, and that was before the Great Depression. He and his wife (Lady Dorothy, the daughter of the Duke of Devonshire) were profoundly moved by the poverty and the hopelessness of the people of Stockton, and there was something wholly uncondescending in their care. With a vigor remarkable for a new MP, Macmillan threw himself into every economic or social issue that touched their condition. With other young members (they were nicknamed the YMCA), he poured out dry-as-dust but compelling pamphlets and books. He was a radical (especially for a Tory), an early Keynesian (Keynes was a Macmillan author), and a planner. A clear-eyed planner, too: when he visited Russia in 1932, no wool was pulled over *his* eyes, and his accounts of the sheer incompetence of Russian "socialist" planning (and of a visit to the Anti-Religious Museum in Leningrad, "one of the queerest exhibitions I have ever seen") are hilarious even in their seriousness and point.

Yet back in Britain he was to risk invidious comparison with the Soviets' Five Year Plans by forming a movement called the Next Five Years. At the heart of his concern were the poor and the jobless of his constituency; he once led a march of the unemployed from Stockton to London. It was not surprising that he attracted the attention of party leaders. He was noticed very early and taken up by Churchill, whom he persuaded to adopt a plan for relieving depressed industries of the burden of local property taxes. Hardly an enthralling subject, this serious young man had made it his cause.

Macmillan was defeated at Stockton in 1929, in the revulsion against the lethargy of Stanley Baldwin's government. Although he was offered a safe seat in the South of England, he chose to remain in Stockton, where he was re-elected in 1931, and held the seat until the Labour landslide in 1945. During the years the locusts ate between the wars, he was unwaveringly opposed to appeasement, predicting in the mid-1930s that there would be a war by 1940 or 1941. Of all the young Conservative insurgents around him, he was the most courageous. When Mussolini invaded Abyssinia in 1935, and the British and French appeased him in the Hoare-Laval Agreement, Macmillan not only voted against the government, but resigned the party's whip, a backbencher's ultimate act of defiance.

The bare bones of all this are recorded by Horne, but it has no feel to it, no context. The story is there, but as Churchill once said of an unappetizing dessert, "this pudding has no theme." Horne's portrayal of this vivid young man in the years of testing for all the democracies is a figure without a landscape. The great debates take place in the Commons—on the General Strike, the Depression and unemployment, India (on which he broke temporarily with Churchill), the appeasement of the dictators—but we are given not even one of them, and no more than a passing reference to the fact that Macmillan was not then a good speaker. Horne seems almost bored with the House, and a stranger to Britain.

There is one really outstanding example of Horne's neglect of the Commons. In April 1956, just switched by Eden from the Foreign Office to the Treasury, Macmillan presented his first and only budget. Horne indeed tells us that Macmillan began his speech in the ornate manner of an undergraduate addressing the Oxford Union before 1914. He does record that Macmillan was met not only by heckling, but by sniggers. He does quote Macmillan saying in his journal, "However, I went on and soon got them under my control." And that is all.

But it was not all, not by a long shot. Horne could have helped himself by going to the report of the *Spectator*'s political columnist at the time. (He seems to have used contemporary journalism very little.) The Suez crisis had not yet broken. In a month or two, as the columnist said, Macmillan would, in the imagination of most of the press, which regarded him as a dilettante, be speaking at garden parties for Conservative ladies, a peeling Edwardian standing before the peeling Georgian facade of a great country house, drawing their sighs. And that is exactly how Macmillan appeared as he opened his budget to a packed house.

Horne has already described in detail how Robert Boothby, Macmillan's closest political friend as a young man, cuckolded him in a love affair with his wife that never really ended and wounded Macmillan savagely. And at the bar of the House, where members stand when it is crowded, as Macmillan rose to present his budget, stood Boothby, florid and cocksure. In his elaborate introduction to his budget, Macmillan paid tribute to his allies, to the radical insurgents in the Conservative Party 30 years earlier. He named them all, including Boothby. [redacted] gazed down from the press gallery and saw Boothby swagger under Macmillan's compliment. It was an electric moment, the sort of moment that reveals the character of the matured politician, and it is ignored by Horne. Apart from the civility that Macmillan always showed Boothby in public, even when the pain was the worst, he had kept his marriage (Boothby's pain, in turn); indeed, a friend said that Macmillan's marriage was the best argument he knew against divorce. But he had also outstripped the young colleagues who had seemed to be ahead of him in the early days, and Boothby not least, who never held more than a minor office. Macmillan could afford his compliment to Boothby, whose soft flesh of vanity did not feel the skewer being inserted.

But the sniggers at Macmillan's self-indulgent introduction persisted. It is very hard for even the most experienced politician to recover from the loss of the House, and the chancellor was letting it slip away. During a long snigger Macmillan smartly turned over perhaps ten pages of his text, cutting the rest of the pulp. And within two minutes he held the House in his hand. It was not as radical a budget as he would have liked. But apart from his controversial introduction of Premium Bonds as a means of enhancing savings (which he unconvincingly denied were a lottery; he brought in a Nonconformist leader, Lord Mackintosh, to say that "if we can't save sinners, let's make sinners save!"), there was more than a dash of the early radical Macmillan: a rise in the tax on profits, coupled with a refusal to raise income tax on the middle and working classes. And the Keynesian accent was still there: "We must all be expansionists." It was on the evidence of this recovery in the House that day that the *Spectator*'s columnist predicted, against the conventional wisdom, that Eden, if anything brought him down, would be succeeded by Macmillan, and not by Rab.

The account of Suez with which this book ends is unpardonably thin, and again because Horne does not place it in the full context of contemporary British society and politics, both of which were vexed. Once more the Commons is neglected, the fury and the bitterness of the debates over the Anglo-

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French-Israeli invasion of Egypt after Nasser nationalized the Canal. Horne is content to give us a brief, disconnected account of the considerations that appeared to weigh within the Cabinet. But he fails to probe Macmillan's character as it was then revealed. For Macmillan stands out as the most shameless of the "Wets," as they were called: originally enthusiastic for the operation, they turned right around to lead the advocates of withdrawal, to undermine Eden.

Macmillan was never comfortable, never open, perhaps, in explaining his conduct. One cannot blame Horne for not offering a pat explanation. But a biographer is meant to come up with his own explanation, to demonstrate its basis in the character that he has shown in development over the years. The Suez crisis was, obviously, a momentous event. The combined pressure (almost collusion) of America and Russia to force the three allies to withdraw from Egypt was the stark, final demonstration that the European nations were no longer superpowers. The Anglo-American "special relationship" was trampled by Eisenhower. Above all, the myth that Britain was still a great imperial power, which its people and its leaders salvaged from its fighting from the first day to the last day of the Second World War, was destroyed in a single week. The nation was divided, bitter, distressed.

What would one expect Macmillan to do, if one had studied the history of his character? The man who had skewered Boothby with a compliment would notice at once that Eden could not recover, personally or politically. (He had never admired Eden, or had any affection for him.) He was very near to the top of the pole. There was only one rival in his way. With a brutal turnabout, Macmillan finished him off. But Macmillan also had a less personally ambitious justification for his reversal. As chancellor of the exchequer, he was the minister most subject to the pressure that Eisenhower and Dulles were bringing to bear by ruthlessly undermining the pound sterling: from that standpoint, the British had no choice but to pull out.

And Macmillan acted from yet another high motive. As his whole past testified, he had the essential political quality of realism. He liked to see things as they were, even if that meant ditching a fond belief or illusion: that the sun would never set on the Empire, for example. Macmillan saw that it had set. At Suez, indeed, it sunk beneath the horizon like the scuttled ships with which Nasser blocked the Canal. There was work for him to do, he felt, for which neither Eden nor Rab was fit: to force the imperialistic party that he would lead to recognize that a "wind of change" was blowing through Africa, which he did, and that in place of the Empire—even in place of the "special relationship" with America—Britain must join Europe, which he did.

That is how this first volume should be subtly pointing us to the years of premiership to come. A biographer, like a novelist, must lay some clues from the beginning, and more with each chapter. The early part of the life should create a tension, for the tale might have gone another away, certainly Macmillan's tale. Nothing was given to him on a platter, by personal endowment or otherwise. There was nothing of the meteor in him, as there was in Boothby (or in Eden). He had to work all the way to advance. He always turned his hand to the often dull tasks that he was given. Yet he became one of the most colorful and significant statesmen of his time. His influence even lives on in the genuine Tory opposition to the unrestrained capitalism of Margaret Thatcher, against whom he delivered one of his last philippics in the House of Lords.

Why? There is no answer from Horne. He almost disdains much of his own evi-

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dence. He seems a little embarrassed to know what to make of Macmillan's exceptional bravery in the trenches at Loos and at the Somme, two of the most frightful slaughters (especially of British troops) during the First World War. Macmillan was wounded several times, finally grievously; and his bravery was deliberate, not rash. It is no wonder that the highest commendation in the 2nd Grenadiers was to be called "as brave as Mr. Macmillan." Almost 30 years later, in North Africa, he managed to pull himself out of a burning plane after it crashed (his mustache was "burning with a vivid blue flame"), and plunged back into it to rescue a Frenchman left inside, incurring such terrible burns to his face that he conducted negotiations from his hospital bed with his face swathed in bandages and only peepholes for his eyes and mouth. One was always aware of the legacy from his wounds: the shuffle in his walk from his smashed thigh, the limp shake from the hand a bullet struck through, the drooping eyelid with the tic it was given by a hand grenade in the trenches, the discolored lips from the fiery crash.

Such a man had steel in him: from his birth, inherited from a family of pronounced instilled values; from his upbringing and his reading; from his trials, which included his mother from Indiana, who seems to have been the most unpleasant kind of Tartar, and the pain over his cuckolding, which (he would indirectly admit) also strengthened his character; and in what amounts to his own built-up, built-in code of a gentleman. It was typical of Macmillan that, although he never received the Victoria Cross or Military Cross, which many thought he deserved, he treasured far more the less publicized honor of two wound stripes.

Macmillan may have created something of a personal myth out of his descent from poor Scottish crofters, one of whom (his crofter grandfather) then founded the great publishing house of Macmillan. Yet the Scottish background is a reality to anyone who has inherited it, especially if he has then been Anglicized in English prep and public schools. That background includes an awareness of a proud, independent spirit: a race of men (and women) whom the English spent many years trying to subjugate. There is also a persistent strain of Calvinism, even though Macmillan was momentarily drawn as an undergraduate toward Anglo-Catholicism and the Roman Church. Work and frugality, and responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, are the ethic.

And there is the traditional Scottish emphasis on education, on bookish learning. The man who on the eve of the Somme was reading Shakespeare's comedies; who lay helpless and forsaken in no man's land in a crater at the Somme reading Aeschylus's *Prometheus* in Greek; who finished the Waverley novels when he was first evacuated to a hospital behind the lines, and then turned to Boswell; who continued this kind of reading throughout his life (as his government crumbled in 1963, I saw him with the World's Classics edition of *Emma*)—such reading needs some rich and thorough investigation, for what it tells us of the man and of the politician. An hour before he was to make his courageous speech to the annual Conservative Party conference to persuade it to support Britain's entry into the Common Market (an astonishing initiative, even though de Gaulle then turned him down), I called on him in his hotel suite. He had a superb edition of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* in his hands (he was reading on his feet): "It's all here, Fairlie," he said. "It's all here—how to do it, the same struggles."

The reading was no affectation or adornment. The point that is missed in Horne's scrappiness is that all Macmillan's parts add up in his maturity to an exceptionally whole man, even in what he eschewed. Horne emphasizes again and again the masks that he wore, as was said so much at the time; and yes, there were masks. But it is the task of the biographer to take us behind the masks, to find the man who was driven to claw for power but as far as possible without coarsening, to exercise it with relish, to ennoble the politics of a nation from "the knowledge one gets of the poorer classes," which (he wrote from the trenches in 1915) was the most interesting and humbling experience of the war.

Bosses And Business

BY NATHAN GLAZER

City for Sale: Ed Koch and the Betrayal of New York by Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett

(Harper & Row, 466 pp., $22.50)

The resources that the FBI poured into the effort to find something on Meade Esposito, the aged former Brooklyn Democratic Party chief, as we learn from Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett's book on the recent New York City scandals, were awesome:

> By early December 1985, the FBI had more than 60 agents assigned full time to Runnymede [as the operation was called]. Thirteen phone lines were being tapped in four different countries. Each line had to be monitored by an agent, with eight posted at SVR [Esposito's insurance brokerage company]. . . . Potentially significant tapes were rushed from the plant and transcribed word for word within three hours. Each new character on the phone had to be identified, each new transaction mentioned had to be researched . . . at the end of the investigation, nearly a thousand individuals would have to be notified that their conversations had been recorded.
>
> Still other agents had to prepare reports every ten days to the court. . . .
>
> In addition, whenever Esposito made a date for a meal where an important conversation might be held, agents from the specialized surveillance squads often had to be rushed to the restaurants on short notice to overhear fragments of the conversation.

And so on. It is a fascinating account of how much is necessary these days to find an indictable crime by a public figure and enough evidence to hold up in court.

In the end, what they found was not what they were looking for: a criminal connection with known crime figures. They found, rather, a fragment of a conversation with Representative Mario Biaggi of the Bronx in which Esposito arranged a vacation for Biaggi and his girlfriend, and in which Biaggi reported that he was helping a Brooklyn company that repaired ships for the Navy to recover some money that was disputed.

The final round-up of the evidence and the suspects was equally awesome: "The operation . . . was as carefully executed as a military exercise. About 150 FBI agents assembled at the office before dawn, were briefed, and were dispatched in all directions." One team flew to Florida with a search warrant for the records of the hotel in which Biaggi had stayed. One wonders why they couldn't let the local FBI office check whether Biaggi and friend had stayed there, and who paid.

One learns a great deal from this very detailed account of political corruption in New York City, probably more than

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any but the most fervent New York City buff will want to know. The main outlines of the story as they emerge from Newfield and Barrett's account are that Ed Koch, originally a reform mayor of New York City, made a deal with the organization Democratic Party leaders of Brooklyn (Meade Esposito), Queens (Donald Manes), and the Bronx (Stanley Friedman) to give them jobs and access in his administration in exchange for their support in his campaigns for mayor and governor.

The main jobs that the party bosses were awarded went to Anthony Ameruso, transportation commissioner; Jay Turoff, chairman of the city's Taxi and Limousine Commission; Lester Shafran, director of the Parking and Violations Bureau (PVB); and Geoffrey Lindenauer, deputy director of PVB. (The first two were Esposito recommendations, the latter two Manes recommendations.) PVB was the seat of the major scandals. Companies that collected parking fines for the city had to make big payoffs to Lindenauer (for Manes) and to Shafran to get their contracts. Lindenauer, using the influence of Friedman and Manes, was able to steer a $22 million contract, for the development of a hand-held computer to be used by meter maids, to a businessman who in return gave Friedman, Manes, and Lindenauer large blocks of stock in the company set up to develop the computer. (Unconnected with any of these scandals was perhaps the one most widely reported nationally: the story of how Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Bess Myerson influenced Judge Hortense Gabel to reduce the alimony of her lover Andy Capasso by giving a job to Gabel's daughter. But this is not part of the larger picture of the influence of political bosses: neither Myerson nor Gabel owed their jobs to them.)

As the FBI began to unravel this skein of payoffs, Manes committed suicide. Friedman, tried and found guilty twice, is in prison. Lindenauer, who became the chief witness, went to prison for a briefer term. Ameruso, Turoff, and Shafran were all indicted and convicted. Another Esposito nominee, Alex Liberman, in charge of leasing property for city agencies, was found guilty and imprisoned for soliciting large bribes from property owners renting to the city. (Liberman, a Holocaust survivor, required that some of those bribes be paid to his synagogue!)

This is a reporters' story, and a good one. Still, one comes away somewhat dissatisfied. Many questions beyond "what happened" arise when one considers political corruption in New York and other large cities. (As I write, the *Boston Globe* is filled with stories about the $500,000 given by the developer of a major office building to a well-connected attorney who did no legal work on the building, and who gave half of the $500,000 to the state Senate president: as a loan, the lawyer and senator say; as a payoff, the developer asserts.) Reporters need only tell the story; law enforcement officials need only nail the malefactors; and neither must ask where exactly the crimes fit into a larger picture.

Of course, they must both make choices. The New York City director of the FBI "argued it was more important to focus on corrupt politicians, or to spend five years wiping out the leadership of one crime family, than to produce a press release saying auto thefts were down by two percent." That explains the scale of the Esposito operation. The citizens of New York might have had other priorities, if they had been asked. Newfield and Barrett's choice is to concentrate on the county Democratic Party leaders and the role of the mayor (curiously, the New York County leaders, heads of Tammany itself, never make an appearance); they are not interested in restaurant inspectors who have been convicted of demanding bribes, collectors of parking meter deposits who have been convicted of stealing them. When Mayor Koch and his commissioners went to a meeting they had called of 3,000 city inspectors (fire, building, health, housing, etc.) to warn them they must do their jobs honestly and would be punished if they didn't, the inspectors jeered. Newfield and Barrett are sympathetic to the jeerers: "The inspectors were tired of being singled out. They knew that, at worse, they were petty thieves in a government consumed at the highest levels with graft."

I am troubled by the event and by their treatment of it. Because the thousands of city inspectors have no links to the party chiefs—they get their jobs through the civil service—corruption among them is of no interest to Newfield and Barrett, even though their jobs may impinge more on the daily life of the city than the high-level corruption of political appointees. To Newfield and Barrett, the prime source of scandal is the party bosses, apparently irredeemably corrupt, and the mayor, who himself clearly honest, is accused of allying himself with them and giving them a share in his administration. (It does not appear to be a large share, though; even the Parking and Violations Bureau is small potatoes in a $20 billion budget.) But when one asks *why* the democratically elected heads of a party organization should be the basic source of corruption, the an-

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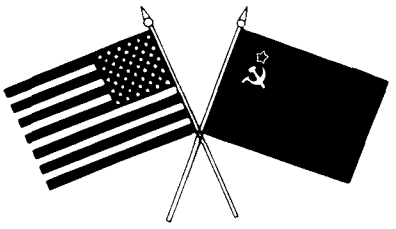

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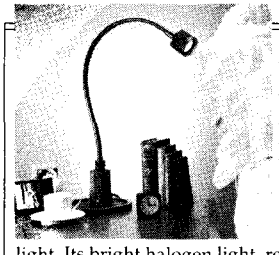

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swer is not very clear. Of course, the party needs jobs and patronage to continue functioning. But there is no necessary jump from this structure to corruption: jobs and patronage are built into the American political system, at the state and national levels, as well as in local government. What is so special then about New York?

The party—every party—operates through a complex system of favors and contributions, one leading to the other; and a necessary part of the system is that contributions be returned with favors. Naturally one does not like a system in which, in New York, the largest contributors to political candidates are real estate developers, who are dependent on the action of elected and appointed officials if they are to build their projects. But there are also problems with the alternatives, such as having the city fund political campaigns. (National funding of presidential campaigns does not seem to have diminished the influence of contributors.) Moreover, party machines, here presented as the primary source of political corruption, have in the past been thought to serve certain useful functions: they have been mechanisms whereby new ethnic groups have entered into city politics (though one sees little of that here; there are no blacks or Hispanics in the story, which seems to include only Jews and Italians, with an occasional Irishman), and they serve as counterweights to the dominance of elective office by the wealthy and the prominent.

So I see no necessary connection between the careers of Manes, Esposito, and Friedman as successful politicians and political corruption. Had they been satisfied with power and influence, they would still be honored members of the city's political establishment. Nor do those most closely involved in politics and government in the city take a connection between political influence and corruption for granted. One saving note even in this lurid account is that the malefactors seem not to have been surrounded in city government by other malefactors, but by honest officials, whistle blowers, decent employees who were suspicious of them but who could not get the ear or the attention of the mayor. Those who chose criminal pursuits went to great lengths to conceal what they were doing.

Which brings us to the role of Mayor Koch, the principal target of the book, which the authors clearly hope will help bring him down as he runs for a fourth term. The mayor plays many roles, few of which are discussed in this book. He runs the city, with its enormous budget and its hundreds of thousands of employees, fights for it politically in Albany and Washington, tries to attract and retain major employers and investors, symbolizes and represents the city on many stages. And amid all this, he uses the media to project himself and what he is doing to the city, and to key blocs of voters—and it is this last role that Newfield and Barrett, first-class city reporters, know best and cover in the greatest detail.

Very likely Koch spends more time at this, and less at other things, than he should. Misfeasance and malfeasance in city government is expected and prepared for: the city has inspector generals in every department, and a substantial Department of Investigation. Newfield and Barrett complain that "despite a claimed tripling of DOI's budget and a doubling of its manpower," the department had conducted 1,400 fewer "background investigations of high-level political appointees" than in some previous year. Fourteen hundred fewer! The mind boggles. The mayor is in the situation, I would think, of the military commanders at Pearl Harbor, who were in possession of the warning that the Japanese might strike—but how were they to disentangle it from the thousands of other messages and warnings? Perhaps the mayor was too complaisant, too involved in his many daily press briefings to watch the stream of hints and warnings closely enough; and he will suffer for it in the next election.

Was there any systematic basis for corruption in New York City? One problem is that we have created a divide between what is legal and illegal that is abstractly clear in law but is not very clear in popular, commonsense morality; and this may make it easy to move from the legal to the illegal. When one takes a bribe, of course, one knows it is wrong—which is why bribes are passed in men's rooms and concealed in obscure bank accounts. When one gives and returns favors, the common coin of politics, the matter is not so clear. In the Myerson-Gabel case, the jury did not agree with the prosecution that the exchange of favors was illegal. In the Esposito-Biaggi case, it did.

But there is a larger problem. It is that when government can make or break businessmen, large and small, through contracts and regulatory powers, it would seem to be inevitable that businessmen will work at getting influence in government, and the pressure on them and those they influence to move from legal to illegal influence and favors will be great.

If one seeks a systematic ingredient to big-city political corruption, it may be found in democratic party political orga-

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nization, but even more in the enormous power that government wields over business, ranging from what a fire or health inspector can do to a small shopkeeper to what the Board of Estimate can do to a billion-dollar project. A number of contributors to another recent book on New York City, *New York Unbound* (edited by Peter Salins), point to the pressure put on business by regulation, and overregulation, including the regulation and oversight instituted to control corruption.

"Persistently and pervasively," Harold Hochman tells us, "through licensing requirements, development regulations, and price controls, government in New York City has displayed an uncommon gift for interfering with private behavior and turning good intentions into harmful results." And thus the need for "a corps of specialists known as expeditors, who have the connections and skills required to 'walk' multiple applications . . . through the bureaucratic maze." It is not surprising that various favors are passed to aid the walk, shading over here and there, and perhaps more often, into the clearly illegal. When government makes itself so sluggish with overregulation, another contributor, Frank Macchiarolla, tells us, "Corruption becomes a part of the 'rules of the game,' a way of getting the system to do its job. It becomes a way of life even for those who do not wish to 'corrupt' the system. The 'payoff' is a requirement if one is going to avoid unnecessary delays because paper does not move through the system."

But where do we draw the line between the "regulation" we want government to perform and "overregulation"? Government must regulate, must buy and sell. It could do much less of both, however, and reduce inducements to corruption. But this is not a fundamental answer. The kind of corruption described by Newfield and Barrett was a free act of will, a personal choice to be dishonest. No system required it. Unfortunately, one cannot imagine a system that would completely eliminate it.

NATHAN GLAZER is professor of education and sociology at Harvard University and the author, most recently, of *The Limits of Social Policy* (Harvard).

TRB *continued from page 4*

haps this is a mercy, since Bush has been known to conflate the defense of civil liberties and the defense of crime.)

Other despots—too many—have murdered writers within their borders, or have sent assassins to murder writers without them. Other despots have banned books and outlawed thoughts. What is unique and unprecedented about Khomeini is the global ambition, and the threatened global reach, of his censorship-by-threat. He has created the first planetary civil liberties case. This is his distinctive contribution to the history of tyranny.

The case imposes a special responsibility on two groups in the West: Rushdie's fellow writers and Khomeini's fellow clerics. The writers, for the most part, have understood the stakes and have reacted accordingly, even if one or two among them, fearing to be added to the Ayatollah's little list, were sluggish about doing their duty. The clerics, for the most part, have been slower and sorrier. Some have condemned the (prospective) murder; few have condemned the (proscriptive) motive. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, for example, let it be known through a spokesman that while the Catholic Church does not condone acts of terrorism, "He encourages everyone not to dignify the publication of this work, which has been viewed by Muslims as highly sacrilegious and offensive." This is "moral equivalence" with a vengeance.

We are accustomed in the West to defending freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We are much less accustomed to defending secularism.

Secularism is not the same as anticlericalism or irreligion. It is simply the recognition that the civic and religious spheres should be kept separate—not only to protect religion from the corruptions and temptations of state power, but also, and more important, to protect civil society from the potential absolutism of religious belief.

In the United States, secularism has come in for some rough treatment in recent years. A large part of the religious right has declared war on "secular humanists," who are sometimes pictured as tools of Satan. More thoughtful conservatives (and a few liberals), troubled by what they see as a decline in the public's sense of right and wrong, look to religion as a means of social control and call upon the state to abandon its religious neutrality.

Our secularism is hard-won, the product of centuries of political, intellectual, and sometimes physical courage. Secularism is the institutionalization of doubt, or more precisely of respect for doubt, and it is harder to love doubt than to love freedom. So we are grudging about our secularism, and some of us are a little ashamed of it. Maybe it takes Rushdie's nightmare and Khomeini's rage to remind us how precious it is, and how fiercely it must be guarded.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

the "good Gentiles" who sheltered Jews from the Nazis. Many of the Americans who were spied upon, indicted, and put on trial for aiding Central American refugees were ministers whose churches had failed to stand up for the Jews in Hitler's Germany, and they were determined that such a thing should "never again" be allowed to happen. Maybe they were wrong. But no less an authority than Elie Wiesel, speaking at a sanctuary symposium in January 1986, chose to compare them to the "righteous Gentiles."

The rabbi of the largest Reform synagogue in Tucson, a man whose family perished in the Holocaust and who is an active supporter of sanctuary work, told me that many parishioners ask him why he is involved; because "these people aren't Jews." "I ask them what they would advise the Gentile family, sitting in their living room in Berlin in 1942, debating what to do for the Jewish family next door. Would they say forget them, they're not Christians?" said the rabbi. "There's no way I can sit here and do nothing to help the victims of another atrocity occurring right in my back yard."

Is the rabbi "wrong"? Who is Lane to sit in judgment between a Salvadoran dragged off by a death squad, tortured, and murdered, and a Jew dragged off to the ovens? Is this a numbers game? How would he rank the estimated 140,000 people murdered or disappeared in Guatemala over the past 16 years?

ANN CRITTENDEN
Washington, D.C.

Griffith Observatory

To the editors:

I had to reread a sentence in Stanley Kauffmann's review of *Working Girl* to make sure my eyes hadn't failed me ("Job Openings," January 30). Goodness, he has brutally high aesthetic standards for women! "That excellent cinematographer Michael Balhaus does wonders with Griffith's face . . . no easy job because of her years and pudginess," he writes. Griffith is all of about 30 (a withered old crone) and looked pretty hot (and refreshingly un-"plastic"), most men I know thought, in her many lingerie scenes in the movie. I'm not a member of the feminist Thought Police that demands that every mention of a woman be approving and every fictional female character be a heroic one, but come on. Kauffmann is using cruel, (I can't believe I'm using this word) *sexist* standards that would never be applied to a male actor.

STEPHANIE GUTMANN
New York, New York

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Embroiled Salman

YA RAB YA SUTTAR, PRAY THE Arabs, meaning: "Oh God, thou who veileth." For Muslims, God's disposition to veil the humiliations of the faithful is among His most salient attributes. But even God cannot veil the embarrassment of some Western friends of the Third World over the frenzy whipped up in Islamic societies and subcultures against the Anglo-Indian Muslim writer Salman Rushdie. Rushdie himself is one of those Western intellectuals who ordinarily don't need God's help in overlooking the embarrassment of their enthusiasms for Third World causes that turn out to be tyrannies. What does he make of the fact that it is Margaret Thatcher, wittily satirized in his book *The Satanic Verses* as "Margaret Torture," who now offers him the protection of Western civilization against the anti-Western forces that would take his life? Some of the writers who spoke up for Rushdie at the American PEN rally in New York have been indifferent to the innocent victims—mostly non-writers, to be sure—of bloody upheavals they have celebrated in foamy speeches and heavy books. It really is of little interest that Frances FitzGerald does not want Rushdie's life taken or his books banned. Far more interesting from her would be a reckoning of how come the extravagant hopes she expressed about the Vietnamese Communists turned out to be so tragically false. As it happens, most of the PEN luminaries never invested heavily in the Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution. Early on he showed himself to be too . . . well, too religious, among other things. So it was not hard for them to mobilize once the Imam went after one of their own. And particularly once he had gotten a few large American corporations like K-Mart (which owns Waldenbooks) to bend before his ire. I wonder how, or indeed whether, the left literati would have responded to the Rushdie affair if Khomeini's death sentence had not provided a crescendo to the weeks of rioting and book burnings by ordinary Muslims around the world—that is, if the issue was merely free speech and Western values, not human life.

ONE OF RUSHDIE'S CELEBRITY intellectual defenders who does have a special stake in the Iranian revolution is Edward Said, the PNC Professor of English Literature at Columbia. Said's speech at the PEN meeting was a crimped and convoluted attempt to combine the obviously hateful behavior of the Muslim masses in many countries toward Rushdie and his book with Said's own decade-long apology for those masses. The Ayatollah really put the anti-Orientalist on the spot. Said, after all, wrote an entire book, *Covering Islam*, to demonstrate how America and the American media had contrived to misunderstand the Iranian revolution. We didn't even try, he said, to grasp the "new horizons being opened up everywhere . . ." The book's cover featured praise from Ms. FitzGerald: "Edward Said shows that the American press has invented a fiction for itself called 'Islam.'" In those days Said's commander, Yasir Arafat, was bragging that the PLO had provided critical support in Khomeini's triumph. Arafat haughtily called Khomeini "the falcon on my arm." Since then there has been a falling out. Said no longer talks of new horizons. The revolution was not about freedom but about a particularly repressive version of Islam. And as for the fiction FitzGerald accused the press of concocting, it turns out to have been, if anything, a pale version of the truth about Khomeini's Iran. Only Iran's war with the Arabs, which postdates his book, enables Said to align himself now with Rushdie's defenders and against Khomeini.

DESPITE WHAT YOUR CONGENIAL public television academic Muslim will tell you, the siege of Salman Rushdie is not simply a Shiite fundamentalist phenomenon. Because of Khomeini the Shiites have become the scapegoats for all Islam. But among the supposedly more moderate Sunnis throughout the world there are learned disputations, and ignorant ones too, as to whether death is not a fitting fate for the author of *The Satanic Verses*. Among Sunnis from Bombay to Brooklyn, with Riyadh and London in between, the other questions have long been settled: Rushdie's work is to be banned and burned. The crowds that threw his little novel into the funeral pyre at Bradford, England, were mostly Sunni. So were those who waged street warfare in India and Pakistan. Of course, there are many Muslims who would dissent from the judgments behind such actions, who believe that Islam can flourish with modernization and the political rights that go with it. But that is neither official Islam nor majority Islam. Muslim civilization is in crisis. Encroached upon by the West, all too aware of its failure to translate immense wealth into either science or power, it still attempts to establish heaven on earth. Such a civilization is hard put to tolerate outsiders or heretics.

THE RUSHDIE AFFAIR HAS SMOKED out the moral equivolizers. In *Covering Islam*, Said ridicules a distinguished Arabist for comparing the mobs in Tehran to those at Nuremberg. Apparently his friend and sometime co-author, Christopher Hitchens, now thinks the parallel to be fair. At the Rushdie rally in New York, he urged the assembled to don their yellow stars in solidarity, a grotesque comparison of the agony of a whole endangered people with the ordeal of a single writer under the protection of Scotland Yard. In a different kind of mistaken analogy, Rushdie has compared his own treatment by Muslims to Philip Roth's treatment by the Jews after the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint*. What Roth got were some silly sermons from rabbis and a few hostile reviews. What his mother said we don't know. It would be more apt to compare the reception of Rushdie's novel to that of Joseph Heller's *God Knows*, which reduces Psalms, Kings I, and Samuel II to crude and witless pornography. What happened to Heller? Bad review in TNR. End of story. Or how about George L. Steiner's novel, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*, at the end of which Adolf Hitler vindicates himself by claiming that his final solution made possible the establishment of Israel. Sensitive stuff, you would think. There were some polemics in highbrow journals. Steiner went on to write other things, and Jews went on to read them.

TOM WICKER IN THE *TIMES* OF February 25 sagely observes that "Western ideas are seen by many devout Muslims as a threat to their system of values." Since Islam is now the fastest growing religion in America, some might suppose the real lesson of the Rushdie episode is the opposite: that Muslim ideas threaten Western values. I suspect the West can hold out. Still, I am puzzled by a front-page story in the *Times*, same day as Wicker's column, reporting that Islam is being "rapidly embraced by Black Americans." One million of the six million Muslims in the United States are thought to be American blacks. It's not a simple matter to enter the exquisitely intricate world of the Muslim faith. My guess is that this is another expression of black alienation from mainstream America. One positive attraction may be the austere Islamic code of personal conduct—an antidote to the rampant pathologies of drugs and families without fathers. Still, I cannot see how conversions by blacks to a religion that sees itself so at odds with America and its norms will speed their journey toward equality.

MARTIN PERETZ

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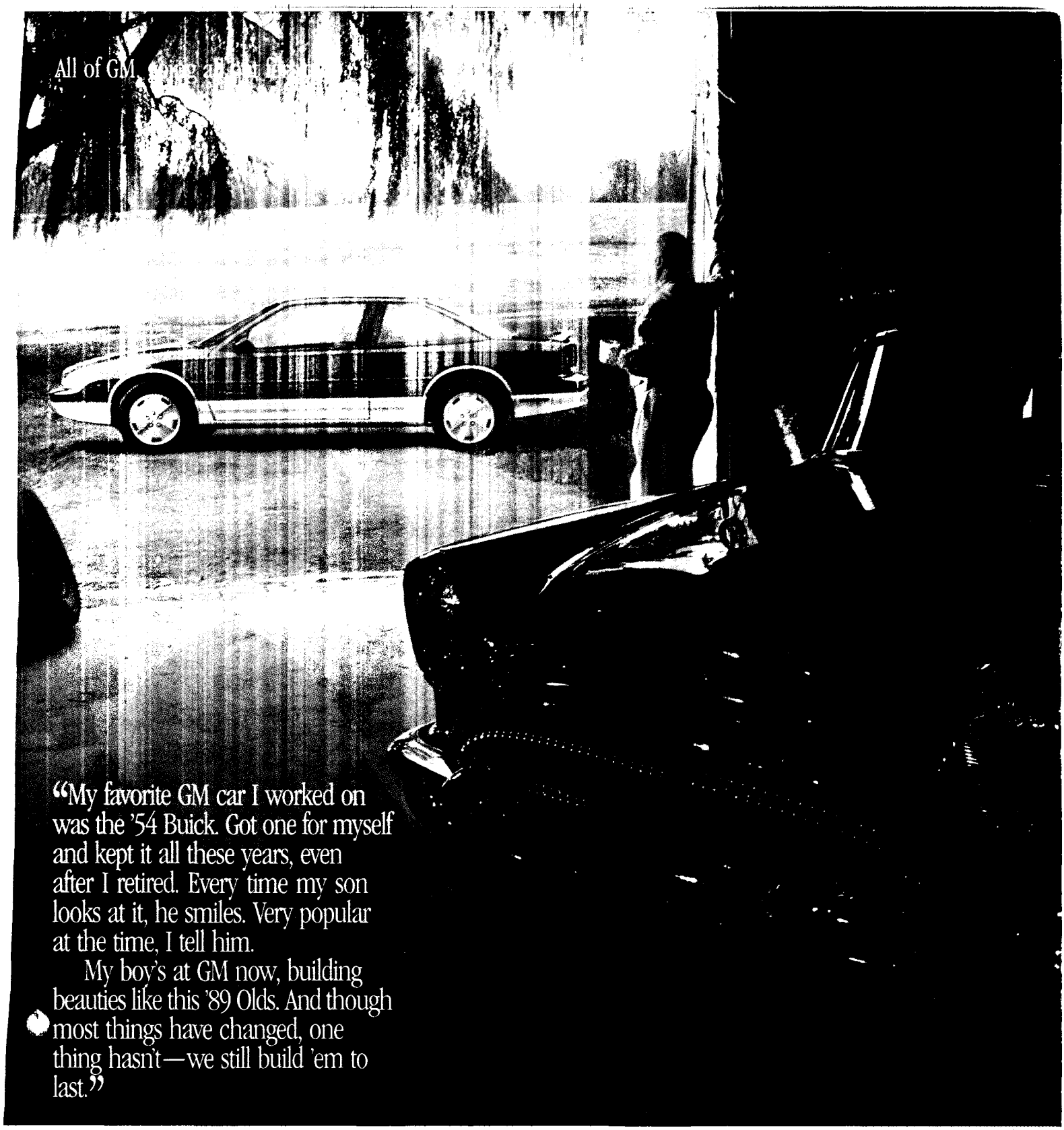

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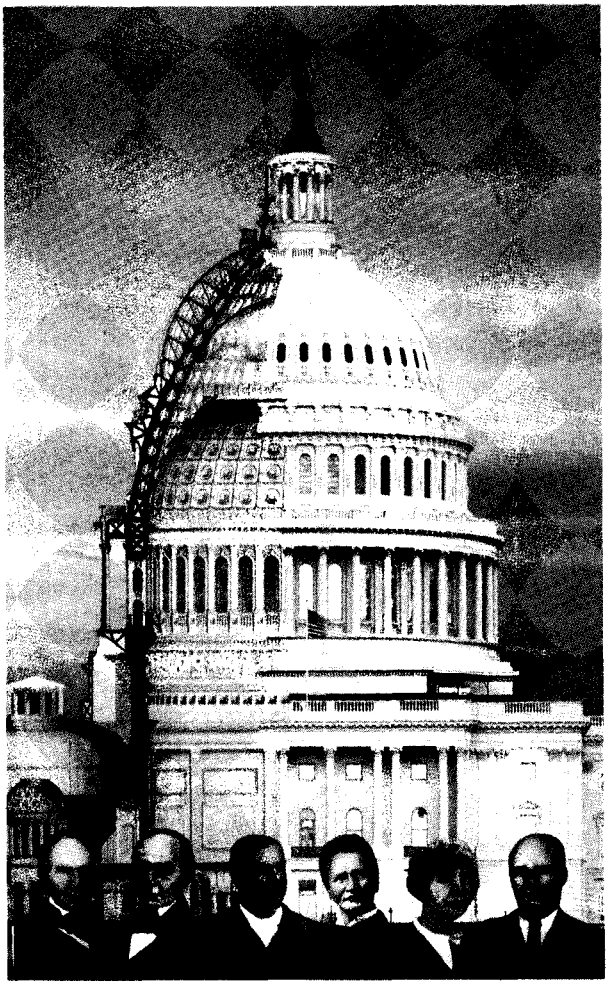

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